
Don Carlos
Crown Prince of Spain

A Drama in Five Acts
by Friedrich von Schiller

Translated and Adapted
for the Contemporary Theater
by Edward Hartwick

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CHARACTERS

Philip the Second, King of Spain
Elizabeth of Valois, his Queen
Don Carlos, the Crown Prince
Grandeess of Spain:
 Prince of Parma, Nephew of the King
 Duke of Alba
 Duke of Feria
 Duke of Medina Sidonia, Admiral
 Marquis Posa, a Maltese Knight
 Count Lerma, Chief of the Royal Guard
 Don Raimond of Taxis, Chief Postmaster
The Grand Inquisitor of the Realm
Domingo, the King's Confessor
Ladies-in-waiting to the Queen:
 Duchess of Olivarez
 Princess Eboli
 Marquise of Mondecar
The Queen's Physician
A Page of the Queen
An Officer of the Guard

Other Grandeess and Ladies, Pages and Guards.

The first act takes place at the Royal Residence
in Aranjuez, the other four at the Royal Palace
in Madrid.

The time is late May of the year 1568.

[Don Carlos]

ACT ONE

SCENE ONE: A Promenade in the Garden of the Royal Residence at Aranjuez. It is a sunny morning.

At rise, Don Carlos and Domingo enter together.

DOMINGO

The pleasant days here in Aranjuez
have come to end. Your Royal Highness does
not leave it happier. We have been here
in vain. Break this mystifying silence!
Open your heart to your father, Prince. The
Monarch cannot pay too dearly for his son's—
his only son's— tranquility. This somber,
even melancholy mood you have displayed
these past eight months, puzzles us all.
It's caused your father deep concern and
even greater to your mother.

CARLOS (half to himself)

I wish I could forget that he made her
my mother.

DOMINGO

Prince?

CARLOS

Reverend father, I've had misfortune
with my mothers. When I was born, my first
act was a matricide—

DOMINGO

It isn't possible, my Prince, that this
can plague your conscience—

CARLOS

And she, the Queen, whom I must now call mother,
hasn't she cost me the affection of
the King? My father never loved me. My
only merit was to've been his only child.
But now, she's given him a daughter.
Indeed, who knows what will be next—

DOMINGO

You can't be serious, Prince. The whole of Spain
adores the Queen, the loveliest of women—
and you alone resent her? Impossible.

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Where everybody loves, Carlos alone
can't hate. Your nature harbors no such
contradiction. But be careful, Prince, that
such remarks won't reach her, for it would cause
her much distress.

CARLOS

You really think so?

DOMINGO

Your Royal Highness may recall when, at
the recent tournament in Saragossa,
a lance's splinter hit the Royal Box.
The Queen was sitting with her ladies on
the balcony. When she became aware of
what had happened, she cried out 'Is the Prince
hurt?' and in her obvious concern, she
nearly threw herself over the balustrade.
Then, when the word came that the King was injured,
she simply called for surgeons, while recovering
her breath. (*Short pause*) You're lost in thought?

CARLOS

I marvel that the King's confessor is
so adept at witty anecdotes. I am
aware, however, that men who make their
specialty to read glances and interpret
gestures, who spread rumors for sensation's sake,
have done more harm throughout the centuries
than murderers with swords and poison.

DOMINGO

You're right, my Prince, to be cautious of people.
But, for your own sake, show discernment. And
in your zeal to spurn the hypocrite, do not
destroy the friend. I do mean well with you.

CARLOS

Don't let my father know that, unless you are
prepared to lose your purple.

DOMINGO

Do you intend to mock me, Prince?

CARLOS

Heaven forbid that I should mock the man
with the enormous power to damn or
sanctify my father.

[Don Carlos]

DOMINGO

My Prince, it's not my place trying to find
the reason for your sorrow. I only ask
Your Highness to remember, it is the Church
that offers sanctuary to the troubled
mind, and even Monarchs have no key to that.
I think you know, Prince, what I mean.

CARLOS

Why don't you give me up? You are a pious
man— that the world knows. But to be frank,
I think the knowledge you are seeking has
its purpose. You will not rest until you sit
on Peter's throne. And such ambition makes
you thirsty. Why don't you tell that to the King
who sent you to me?

DOMINGO

The King sent me?

CARLOS

So I said. I know too well that at this court
I am betrayed. A hundred eyes are hired
to observe me. I know that Philip pays
his lowest servant far more handsomely
for a reported word of mine than he
rewards a noble deed. But enough of this,
I've said too much already.

DOMINGO

Just one more thing, my Prince. The King desires
to arrive in Madrid before sundown.
The Grandees are already on their way.
Have I the honor, Prince, to tell His
Majesty that you—

CARLOS

You may. I shall be ready.

*(Domingo bows and leaves. Carlos remains pensive for
a few moments, when a Page enters.)*

PAGE

Your Royal Highness, the Marquis Posa
requests an audience.

CARLOS

Marquis Posa? It isn't possible!
It can't be—

(Enter Marquis Posa.)

[I-1]

POSA

It can't be, but it is! (*They run toward each other and embrace.*)

CARLOS

Rodrigo— is it really you? By God,
it is. Oh, what a wonderful surprise.
And now I feel all will be right again,
for this embrace did wonders for my wounded heart.

POSA

Your wounded heart? And what will be alright?
What's wrong, Carlos?

CARLOS

Not now, my friend. Let me enjoy this moment. —
What brings you back so unexpectedly
from Brussels? Whom do I thank for this? I ask,
when I should know. Who else but you. You must
have known that I was here alone without
a friend. You hurried back, yet still I ask—

POSA

Carlos, my friend, forgive me if I return
this turbulent excitement with mere
bewilderment. I did not quite expect to see
King Philip's son like this. Your face is red,
your hands are trembling. What does it mean, Carlos?
Is this the bold, courageous prince to whom
a subjugated people sends me? I stand
before you now, not as a boyhood friend,
but as ambassador of mankind. The
provinces of Flanders and Brabant shared
this embrace with me and beg for rescue.
They will be lost, once Alba— fanaticism's
executioner— moves into Brussels
with the law of Spain. You are the last hope
of those gallant people. That hope will die
the moment when your heart stops beating for
humanity.

CARLOS

Then it must die.

POSA

What? You can't be serious!

CARLOS

Yes, once upon a time, when there was talk
of freedom, my blood ran faster. But that

[Don Carlos]

was long ago. The man who stands before you
now is not the same you left at Alcala—
who was presumptuous enough to dream
of building a new Spain. Of course, the idea
was intriguing, but it was immature.
It was a dream that's gone.

POSA

A dream, Carlos? All our plans— no more than dreams?

CARLOS

No more than that. And dreams must end— all dreams.
Oh God, Rodrigo, you're the only one on
earth I trust. In all this empire, as far
my father's rule extends, I have no one
to confide in and to relieve my conscience.
Please let me keep the one place on this earth
where I can be myself.

(Posa puts his hand on his shoulder.) If, what I think
is true, and among millions you alone
can know me— understand me— and if this understanding
is worth more to you than the King's favor—

POSA

You know it is. A true friend need not boast
about his friendship.

CARLOS

Oh Rod, so poor have I become, so low
I've sunk that I need to remind you of
a particular event of our boyhood
years. You will remember, during our games
one day, my aunt— Bohemia's Queen— was struck
quite accidentally in the eye by one
of our shuttlecocks. She thought it had
been done on purpose and, in tears, ran
to the King complaining. My father, in
a furious mood, had all the boys assembled
to report to him the culprit. He vowed
to punish him severely, even his own
son. I saw you standing in the back, white
as a sheet and shaking. So it was I
who stepped forward and admitted my mistake.
In front of the entire court, he carried
out his threat like on a slave. I looked
at you and did not cry. I very nearly
bit my teeth out, bleeding under cruel
strokes, but did not cry for mercy. Afterward,

[I-1]

you came to me, and for the first time in your life, you knelt before me, and in tears you promised that, when I am king, you would settle this debt.

POSA

I meant it then, and I'll renew this boyish pledge now as a man. My hour to repay will come.

CARLOS

This is the moment, Rod. I need a friend now more than ever. A dreadful secret burns my soul, and it will out. I cannot bear it any longer. Listen to me— and don't say anything. (*He turns away*) I love the Queen, my mother. (*Brief pause.*) I'm not her son, of course— it's not unnatural, but in the world's opinion, she is my father's wife and that makes her my mother. The law of Rome, that of society, as well as nature's, condemn this passion. And what is worse, my claim to her affection conflicts directly with my father's rights. I know all that, and still I love her. I also know that it can lead only to madness or the scaffold. And so I love, without a hope, in violation of the law, in fear of death— but still I love.

POSA

Does the Queen know of this?

CARLOS

Could I have told her? She is Philip's wife, she is the Queen, and this is Spain! Watched by my father's jealous mind, closed in by etiquette, I cannot even speak with her alone. Eight hellish months it's been since Philip called me from the University. Eight hellish months, since I've been damned to see her daily but can't speak with her! Eight hellish months of fire raging in my blood! A thousand times I've had the terrible confession on my lips, but never could I bring myself to speak. And all I want is one brief minute with her— is that so much?

POSA

What about your father? Does he suspect—

[Don Carlos]

CARLOS

Must you speak of him? All terrors of the soul
I'd sooner talk about than him!

POSA

You really hate him, don't you?

CARLOS

No, I don't. It isn't hate I feel for him.
It is a kind of panic. The fright of the
transgressor overwhelms me when I hear his
name. Can I help it that his own tyrannical
hand had crushed all feeling in my early youth?
I was six years of age when I was first
brought to him. It was quite early in the
morning, and in the time it took for me
to walk up close to him, he had signed four
death verdicts. After that I saw him only
when he announced my punishment for some
offense. But no more of that. I fear, I'm
getting bitter. Rod, can you explain how
nature could produce two men of such extremes
and make them son and father? Two hostile
strangers joined together by so strong a bond—
and now by one desire—

POSA

Carlos, I want to ask something of you.
It's for your own protection, for at this time
your state of mind is not the best for
rational decisions. Will you promise
that you'll do nothing hasty— and that, no
matter what might strike your fancy, you will
first tell me, so we can talk about it?
Will you promise that?

CARLOS

Gladly. I'll put my fate into your hands
if that is what you have in mind.

POSA

The King returns to Madrid shortly, and
time is of the essence. So, if you want
to see the Queen, it must be now and now.

CARLOS

That was my fervent hope. But how? I've given up.

[I-1]

POSA

Don't give up yet. I am about to go to
her and to present myself. If she is still
as gracious as she was at Henry's court
in France, then she'll be frank with me. And if
I see a glimpse of hope that she might see you,
she'll find a reason to dismiss her ladies.

CARLOS

Most of them seem to like me, especially
the Marquise Mondecar; her son serves me
as page.

POSA

That's good. I'll go right now, and I suggest
you stay nearby, so when I give the sign
you will be ready.

CARLOS

That I'll be. Now hurry.

POSA

I'm going. You stand by. I'll see you shortly
at the Queen's.

(They go in opposite directions.)

[Don Carlos]

SCENE TWO: The Garden of the Queen's Residence at Aranjuez.

The Queen is entering with her Ladies in waiting, the Duchess of Olivarez, Princess Eboli, and Marquise of Mondecar.

QUEEN

I want you next to me, dear Mondecar.
The Princess' cheerful mood oppresses me.
She is too glad to leave Aranjuez.

EBOLI

I won't deny that I'll be very happy
to see Madrid again.

MONDECAR

Your Majesty finds it so difficult
to leave Aranjuez?

QUEEN

At least this charming countryside. This place
here is my world. Somehow it seems, the wind
blows in from France and makes me feel at home.

MONDECAR

Madrid will seem exciting after this
slow and uneventful month. I'm looking
forward to the bullfight. Moreover, an
autodafe was also promised us.

QUEEN

An autodafe promised? I hear that
from my gentle Mondecar?

MONDECAR

Why not, Your Majesty? They're only heretics
who will be burning at the stake.

QUEEN (to Princess Eboli)

What about you, Princess? Do you share this view?

EBOLI

I wouldn't want Your Majesty to think me
a worse Christian than Marquise Mondecar.

QUEEN

Why no, of course. I still forget at times
just where I am. No more of this. I did
expect so much of our stay, but not all
came to pass. Perhaps that is the essence

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of all hope—

(A Page enters and speaks softly with the Duchess)

DUCHESS OF OLIVAREZ

The Marquis Posa asks to see Your Majesty.
He's just returned from Flanders via France,
and has, it seems, letters from the Queen Mother.

QUEEN

Does protocol permit me to receive him here?

OLIVAREZ

My instructions do not cover such an
extraordinary situation. Let me
consider. A Grandee, returning from
a foreign court, wants to deliver letters
for the Queen in person at her private
residence—. That is indeed quite complicated.

QUEEN

I will assume responsibility.

OLIVAREZ

In that case, will Your Majesty permit
me to withdraw meanwhile?

QUEEN

If you would like—

*(She signals the Page to admit Marquis Posa who enters
as the Duchess leaves, followed by the Page. Posa bows
before the Queen.)*

Marquis, I bid you welcome back to Spain.

POSA

I've never been more proud to call Spain my own country
than I'm now.

QUEEN (to Eboli and Mondecar)

At the Knights' Tournament in Reims, the Marquis
was on my father's team and won the pennant
thrice. He was the first of his compatriots
to make me proud to become Queen of Spain.
(To Posa) When we last met in Paris at the Louvre,
I wouldn't have believed you'd be my guest
here in Castile.

POSA

Nor had I dared to hope that France would lose to
Spain the only treasure that we envied.

[Don Carlos]

QUEEN

You are gallant, Marquis. Your travels, so
I hear, have taken you to France. You bring
me news about my mother and my family?

POSA (handing her letters)

Her Majesty, the Queen Mother was not well.
Her greatest comfort seemed to be the knowledge
of her daughter being happy as the Queen
of Spain.

QUEEN (looking at the letters)

I miss her sorely. I hear, Marquis, that
you intend to stay at home now. You've traveled
much, seen many lands. You'll find Madrid perhaps
too quiet.

POSA

Quiet? That's more than most of Europe has
these days.

QUEEN

So I have heard, although I am no longer
well informed on world affairs.
(*To Princess Eboli*) I think I see a hyacinth right there,
would you please fetch it for me, Princess. (*exit Eboli.*)
I should be very wrong, Marquis, if your
arrival back in Spain had not produced
much happiness for someone here at court.

POSA

I found him in a most distressing state
of mind. One thing alone could cheer him up—
(*Princess Eboli returns with the flower and hands it to
the Queen.*)

EBOLI

As the Marquis has seen so much of foreign
lands, he must have fascinating things to tell.

POSA (tongue in cheek)

That I have. To seek adventure is, of course,
a knight's first duty, and of all none is
more prominent than to protect young ladies—

MONDECAR

Against giants, no doubt. That's why they have
all disappeared.

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POSA (more serious)

Force is the giant for the unprotected.
Your Majesty, on my return from Naples,
I was witness to a stirring tale which,
were it not too boring to Her Majesty,
I'd like to tell.

QUEEN

Have I a choice? Can I suppress the curious
mind of Princess Eboli? But then, I must
confess, I, too, enjoy a story.

POSA

Two noble houses in Mirandola,
tired of age-old rivalry, decided
to make peace at last. To seal the bond,
Fernando, nephew of the powerful
Pietro, and Mathilda, the lovely
daughter of the other house, were to be
joined in marriage. There never were
two people more devoted to each other.
Fernando, still a student at the
university, but impatient for
the ecstasy of love, lived only for
the moment of betrothal.

*(The Queen becomes more attentive. Posa continues,
addressing himself mostly to Princess Eboli.)*

Meanwhile, Pietro's wife succumbs to illness.
After a brief mourning period, the old
man planned to find out for himself if
rumors of Mathilda's beauty were not
exaggerated. And as they say, he came,
he saw— and he was captivated. This
new emotion suffocates the softer voice
of nature, and so the uncle comes to
court his nephew's bride. With influence so great,
he wins and leads her proudly to the altar.

QUEEN

And what about Fernando?

POSA

Unknowing of what happened, he— Fernando—
journeys to Mirandola, arriving
there at night. He finds the palace festively
illuminated and is greeted by
bacchanal uproar. More than a hundred
guests are feasting, wine is flowing freely,

[Don Carlos]

and at the table's head there sat Pietro
and his bride. And when Fernando recognized
Mathilda, he collapsed; it felt as if
a knife had pierced his heart—

EBOLI

Poor Fernando—

QUEEN

You say he was your friend?

POSA

I have none better.

EBOLI

How does the story end?

POSA

Quite sad. The memory is painful. Forgive
me if I don't continue—

QUEEN

I long to see my daughter. Princess, will
you go and with her nurse bring her to me?

*(Princess Eboli curtsies and exits. Posa winks at a page
and whispers some instructions to him, whereupon the
page leaves quickly. The Queen opens the other letter
Posa had given her and, while reading it, shows surprise.
Meanwhile, Posa speaks confidentially with the
Marquise of Mondecar. When the Queen has finished
reading, she turns to Posa.)*

You've told us nothing of Mathilda.
Doesn't she know how her Fernando suffers?

POSA

No one has yet explored Mathilda's heart.
But often those who suffer deep, carry
their pain in silence. *(He looks around.)*

QUEEN

You seem impatient. Are you expecting
someone?

POSA

It just occurred to me how happy someone
could be made— were he in my place now.

QUEEN

Whose fault is it that he's not?

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POSA (quickly)

Could I interpret this to mean that you'd permit him to appear?

QUEEN

What do you mean, Marquis?

POSA

Could he hope—

QUEEN

Hope what? You frighten me. You're not implying that—

POSA

He's here, Your Majesty—

(Carlos enters, rushes to the Queen and kisses her, then kneels before her. Posa leads the Marquise of Mondecar away.)

CARLOS

At last, the moment I've been craving—

QUEEN

What rashness! What foolhardiness! Get up at once. My ladies are nearby—

CARLOS

I won't get up. Here, I'll stay forever—

QUEEN

You must be mad! What do you think gives you the right to this audacity? I am the Queen— before the world your mother. I must inform the King of this intrusion—

CARLOS

Tell him! I want to die. The scaffold doesn't scare me. Death is not too high a price for this— This taste of heaven—

QUEEN

And I? You want my death as well?

CARLOS (rising to his feet)

Good heavens, no! I didn't think. I'll go— You see what influence you have on me: one wink, one glance, one syllable from you puts me at your command. What do you want, what can I do for you? Name it, and to the farthest point on earth I'll go to get it.

[Don Carlos]

QUEEN

Leave me! It is the only thing I ask.
Leave me before it is too late, before
my ladies— my jailkeepers— return and
tell the King of this encounter—

CARLOS

I've gambled all my chances on this moment,
but not that it be spoiled by fear. No! Ten
thousand times this earth could turn and not give
us again this opportunity.

QUEEN

It must not be repeated. Ever! What,
Carlos, do you want of me?

CARLOS

Oh, you were mine! Two sovereign thrones had
promised you to me. You had been pledged to
me by heaven and the world. Then Philip
came and stole you from me—

QUEEN

He is your father—

CARLOS

He's your husband!

QUEEN

Who's leaving you the world's most splendid
empire as your inheritance—

CARLOS

And who leaves you— my mother!

QUEEN

Good God! You're mad—

CARLOS

Does Philip know how rich he is? Is his
heart big enough to treasure yours? Oh, I
would not complain— I could forget how
infinitely happy you'd have made me—
if only you were happy. But are you?
Can you be? Oh, I'm well aware how Philip
wooed. But can he love? What has he made you
in his empire? Do you share his throne? No.
For if you did, how could his Albas murder
and drain the blood of Flanders for the 'faith.'
Are you his wife? I can't believe it. A

[I-2]

wife has some control over her husband's actions. But have you?

QUEEN

What makes you think my life at Philip's side is all that miserable?

CARLOS

I only know how different your life would be if you were mine-

QUEEN

Conceited man! Has it occurred to you that my feelings might completely disagree with yours? That Philip's tender reverence, his quiet love, could mean much more to me than his son's presumption? That his mature respect—

CARLOS

In that case, please forgive me. Not for a moment had I thought— you loved him.

QUEEN

I hold the King in high regard.

CARLOS

But that is not the same. That is not love. Haven't you ever loved?

QUEEN

That question is improper.

CARLOS

You've never been in love?

QUEEN (reluctantly)

Love? I can no longer love.

CARLOS

Is it your heart or your position that forbids it?

QUEEN

It is my duty, Prince. One must obey one's fate.

CARLOS

Must? Obey? I don't intend to 'must' when my own will refuses. I don't intend to be the most unhappy creature in this land,

[Don Carlos]

if no more than a change of laws could make
me the most happy.

QUEEN

Do I hear right? You still dare hope
when everything is lost?

CARLOS

I will, concede nothing as lost, as long
as I'm alive.

QUEEN

And you still hope— for me? *(She looks at him searchingly, then continues with dignity)* Yes, Prince, why not?
A new monarch can do more than that— can
change the laws, can burn the statutes that
displease him, even disinter the dead and
scatter their remains onto the winds. And then,
to climax his desire— he can wed his
mother!

CARLOS

Oh God, how terrible that sounds! I wish
you hadn't said that. Yes, now I know
you're lost to me forever. And in this knowledge
there lies hell!

QUEEN

Oh Carl, I know. I understand your feelings.
That endless pain within you is your love.
But equally as endless is the force to
conquer it. That power also is within
you. Use it, Carl, and be the man that
destiny intended! You have the passion
and the range of heart to be a noble king.
Be it then! And bear in mind— great love that
cannot be fulfilled is still great love. Yes,
Carlos, I'm aware I was the first you loved.
But let your second love be Spain! And for
your sake, and for the sake of history, I have
to yield, for Spain must be your greater love.

CARLOS

You wound my heart and heal it— both at the
same time. What magic— what magnificence!—
I don't yet know if I can be what you
expect, but I will try. I promise, I will try—
(Marquis Posa comes rushing back.)

[I-2]

POSA

The King is coming! You must go— quickly!

QUEEN

Go! He will suspect something most terrible
if he should see you—

CARLOS

So brief a visit! Who knows when we will
meet again. What can I take with me?

QUEEN

The friendship of the Queen— (*handing him one of the letters Posa
had given her*) and from the Netherlands— these tears.

*(Carlos takes the letter, looks at her once more, then
rushes away with Posa. The Queen looks around anxiously
for her ladies in waiting, as the King enters. He is
followed by the Duke of Alba, Count Lerma, Domingo, and
several other Grandees who remain in the background.)*

KING (looking around, then to the Queen)

You are alone, Madame, with not a single
lady to attend you? I am astonished!
What happened to your ladies?

QUEEN

My gracious husband—

KING

What happened to your ladies? (*To the Grandees*) I want a
full account of this deplorable offense.
Who is in charge today to serve the Queen?

QUEEN

My gracious husband, don't be angry. I am
to blame. I sent the Princess Eboli away—

KING

You dismissed her?

QUEEN

Merely to fetch the nurse with the infanta.
I longed so much to see my child.

KING

This could excuse the Princess Eboli.
But what about the others?

*(The Marquise of Mondecar who had previously returned and
joined the others in the background, now steps forward.)*

[Don Carlos]

MONDECAR

It was my fault, Your Majesty. I left—

KING

For that, you'll have ten years to think about
your crime far from Madrid.

*(The Marquise curtsies, then steps back and covers her face.
There is noticeable consternation among all.)*

QUEEN

If I've done wrong, my husband, then it would seem
to me that my position as your wife,
as Queen, should save me from embarrassment.
Is it mere force that guards a lady here?
A chaperone is more protection than her
virtue? *(She goes to the Marquise of Mondecar)* It's not my custom to let
go in tears one who has served me faithfully
and well. Dear Mondecar! You have incensed
the King, not me. *(She removes her bracelet and gives it to her.)*
Take then this token to remind you of
my feeling and this sorry moment. Now,
go to France— my France. I promise, you'll
be welcome there.

KING

If this reproach of mine has hurt you, then
remember please that my affection brought
it on. *(Pointing to the Grantees)* Here are the most important
servants of my throne, and when I close my
eyes at night, they watch my realm and vouch
for its security. And should my love be less
protected than my throne? The Duke of Alba
and my armies can guaranty my provinces.
But only my own eyes can guaranty
your love.

QUEEN

If I've offended you, my husband—

KING

I have been called the richest man in
Christendom. The sun does never set over
my realm. But all that once belonged to someone
else, and after me will be possessed by
others. You alone are mine, and this is
(pointing to his heart) where I'm vulnerable.

[I-2]

QUEEN

You fear something, my Lord?

KING

My gray hair, perhaps? No, Madame. The moment
I begin to fear, I also stop to fear.

(To the Grandees) Among the Grandees of my court, the first
is missing. Where is Don Carlos? *(There is silence)* That boy
Carl is starting to antagonize me!

He avoids his father's presence since his
return from Alcala. His blood is warm,
why are his eyes so cold? His manner is
correct, but no more than correct.
Be on your guard with him, I urge you.

ALBA

I shall, Your Majesty. As long as there's
a heartbeat left under this armor, King
Philip may rest well.

LERMA

May I most humbly contradict the wisest
of all kings? I revere my sovereign
too deeply to have him judge his son so
harshly. There may be cause to fear Prince Carlos'
temper, but never his intent or pureness
of his heart.

KING

You may be flattering my father's instinct,
Count of Lerma, but as a king, I should
prefer the Duke of Alba's counsel.
But no more of this. My duties call me.
The dangerous pest of heresy infects my
people, rebellion swells in Flanders and
Brabant. The time is right to set a
frightening example for all who deviate
from the faith. And so I've ordered a
tribunal in Madrid that shall be quite
unique in its severity. The court is
solemnly invited.

*(He leads the Queen away; all others follow. A few
moments later, Carlos and Posa enter from the opposite side.)*

CARLOS

They're gone, and I must follow shortly.
There's not much time.

[Don Carlos]

POSA

Carl, did you really mean what you just said to me?

CARLOS

I did indeed! My mind's made up. Flanders must be saved. She wants it— that's enough for me.

POSA

The Duke of Alba, I have heard, has been proposed as governor already.

CARLOS

Then I must hurry. Tomorrow, I'll seek audience with my father, and I will ask for this appointment for myself. It is my first request of him. He can't deny it. I am not really welcome in Madrid and this provides him with a valid reason to keep me from his court. But to be frank, Rodrigo, I hope for even more. Perhaps I can succeed in face to face encounter to gain back my rightful place and to restore the sentiment between us that nature had intended.

POSA

This is the kind of talk I want to hear! Now you are more yourself again. But are you also quite prepared to defy majesty, should that be necessary? It won't be easy. He has all the power. If you can reach his instinct as a father, if you can make him confident that he can trust you— you might have a chance. Not otherwise. But bear in mind, no matter what, your day will come. One day, Philip must die and Carlos will be King.

CARLOS

And then, dear friend, you'll be more powerful as subject than I shall be as King. What do you want? Wealth, honor, high position? Name them, and they'll be yours. You say nothing? Are you not certain of yourself?

POSA

Who can be— at the prospect of so generous a King?

[I-2]

CARLOS

But I'll expect a great deal from you, too.
If ever flattery engulfs me, if my eyes
dry up where they shed tears before, and if
my ears are blocked to any suppliant,
then shake me by my shoulders and restore
my sense to me, remind me who I am—

POSA

You will remember, quite without my help.
Some day, the world will know you as I do,
and in the books of history, your name
will be Carlos the Great.

CARLOS

There you begin to flatter me already.
But to achieve this goal, I need you at
my side. I need your mind, your heart, your
trust in me. But most of all I need a friend.
Or more than that— I need a brother. Can
you be that, Rodrigo? Will you be my brother?

POSA

Your brother— proudly!

CARLOS

Always?

POSA

As long as time is measured.

CARLOS

Now I can face the King. Arm in arm with you
I'll hurl defiance at my century!
(They go out quickly.)

ACT TWO

SCENE ONE: The Audience Chamber in the Royal Palace in Madrid.

The King sits on the throne, Carlos and the Duke of Alba stand before him.

CARLOS

The Kingdom must come first. I'll gladly wait
until the Minister has finished. He
speaks for Spain— I am the House's son. *(He bows and steps back.)*

KING

The Duke will stay and Prince Carlos may speak.

CARLOS (to Alba)

Then I must ask the Duke to be so generous
to let me have my father to myself
for just an hour. A son, as you must know,
may want to talk of things intended only
for his father's ear.

ALBA

I am your father's friend.

CARLOS

But do I have the right to call me
yours as well?

KING

Have you the right? I do not care for sons
who think their choice of friends is better
than their fathers'.

CARLOS

Will the Duke's chivalry permit him then
to witness this audition? If I were
in his place, I would not dare to come between
a father and his son, and were a crown
at stake.

KING (stepping down from the throne, angrily)

Alright, Duke. Take your leave. No, in my private
chamber wait until I'll call you.

(Alba goes into the King's study.)

CARLOS (rushing to the King, on one knee)

Thank you, my father. Thank you for this favor.
Give me your hand, please. Why have you excluded me

[II-1]

from your affection, father? What have I done?

KING

Get up, Carlos. I don't much care for artful talk.

CARLOS (getting up)

Artful talk? That might befit a courtier,
but not me. Father, all is not well between
us, though I wish it were not so. I am
not bad, my father. Perhaps, my temper is
too quick, my blood too hot, but blame my
youth for that and not my heart.

KING

Youth? Blood— and heart? Don't call on nature's
elements to justify yourself.

CARLOS

Let this be our moment, father. We are
alone. The wall of etiquette does not
divide us now. I see a ray of hope,
a premonition urging me to seek
reunion now. (*On his knee again, grabbing the King's hand.*)
This is the moment, father. Let there be
peace between us.

KING

Oh, do get up.

CARLOS

Peace, father, reconciliation—

KING (tearing himself away)

Enough! This is too frivolous—

CARLOS

Too frivolous, your son's affection?

KING

What? Do I see tears? How unbecoming!
If you seek access to my favors, go out
and earn them first. Go out into the
battlefield, fight my campaigns. When you return,
mud-soaked and weary, then you will find my
arms open to you. But not like this. You're not
my son like this!

CARLOS

Nor you my father! What circumstance of
nature made this stranger join the company

[Don Carlos]

of men? Tears are the mark of men as God
created them, of flesh and blood! Your eyes
are always dry— did not a mother bear
you in her womb? Oh father, don't go on
suppressing your emotions. There is still
time to change. Yes, even in your life
some dark hour may come when you might wish
you weren't made of stone.

KING

If you intend to sway me— to dispel
my gravest doubts with words, you won't succeed.

CARLOS

Doubts, father, doubts? I want to kill these doubts
once and for all, and penetrate the ice
that separates us. Who are those men that,
in effect, caused me to lose my father?
The priest Domingo? What does he have to
offer for a son? The Duke of Alba?
What is he proposing in exchange for
giving up your fatherhood? Don't you want
love, affection, understanding? Here, in
my chest, there flows a spring— fresher and faster
than those murky waters that always must
be cleansed with Philip's gold.

KING

How dare you to malign my good and faithful
servants? I chose these men, and you'll respect them!

CARLOS

That I will never do! But I can do
much more! Look at the likes of Alba. Does
a paid vassal care about an empire
that he can never rule? Does Alba give
a damn if your gray hair turns white? Your
Carlos could have loved you. The thought of
growing old— of sitting quite alone and
lonely on the throne— that thought would make me
shudder.

KING (moved by these words, after a brief pause)

I am alone.

CARLOS

You needn't be. My father, please don't hate
me any more. I am your son, I want to
love you. Be young again with me and live

[II-1]

life's dream once more. Love can give meaning to
your deeds. How wonderful to plant the seeds
for a devoted son to harvest! How grateful
he would be. Oh father, life could be a
paradise on earth. But this intelligence
your priests have kept from you.

KING

Carlos, my son. You work your eloquence
with much effect— to paint a blissful scene
that you yourself denied me.

CARLOS

No, father. You have shut me out, both from
your heart and from affairs of state. Till now,
until this day, I, the Crown Prince of Spain,
was but a stranger in this land that I shall
rule some day. Oh, you don't know how often
I was crimson with embarrassment when
ministers of foreign potentates
mentioned occurrences here at court of
which I was completely ignorant.

KING

Your temper, your unstableness often
cast doubt on your responsibility.
It can destroy my trust.

CARLOS

First give me something to destroy! My veins
are bursting with ambition— twenty-three years
old and nothing done for immortality!
I am awake. At last, I'm ready to
redeem all the lost hours of my youth.
My King, may I state the request that led
me here?

KING

Another one?

CARLOS

The dangerous rebellion in Brabant
presents a growing threat. To tame the boldness
of the rebels requires strong and well
considered measures. You plan to let the
Duke of Alba lead your troops. Let me suggest
one better: Give me this army, Sire.
The peoples of the Netherlands love me,
and with my blood I'll vouch to you

[Don Carlos]

their loyalty.

KING

You are a dreamer, Carl. This task calls for a man, not for a boy.

CARLOS

It calls but for a human being, and that is one thing Alba never was.

KING

Nothing but force will quell this revolution. Anything less is madness. You are too soft, my son. The Duke is feared.

CARLOS

Don't let my gentleness mislead you, Sire. I am a man full of ambition, ready to prove my courage for the Crown. My royal name precedes me. It will conquer where Alba's hangmen only murder. It is my first request, my father. Let me conduct your army into Flanders.

KING

And feed my troops to your ambition? Hand my own knife to my murderer?

CARLOS

Oh God! Is this the outcome of this long awaited moment? Answer me gentler, Sire. Don't let me go with such a heavy heart. It is my urgent need, my last and desperate attempt— I cannot bear that you deny me everything. Your Alba, your Domingo are the victors of this moment, and I, your son, the loser. For one brief moment here today, you let me feel your gentle heart. It could have been enough to forge a sturdy bond. Don't let this moment die, Sire. Don't let me go a beggar. I want to lead your army into Flanders.

KING

At your King's displeasure— don't repeat this. Ever.

CARLOS

I risk my King's displeasure and ask again,

[II-1]

one final time: Entrust me Flanders. Let me leave Spain. Madrid is crushing me— It's like a dungeon. It takes a different sky to cure me. Save me, my father, send me to Flanders.

KING

Such ills as yours require a good doctor's care. You remain here. The Duke will go to Flanders.

CARLOS

Is this your final word?

KING

It is the King's decision.

CARLOS

My business is over.

(He rushes out. The King paces up and down in deep thought as Alba emerges from the King's study.)

KING

Be prepared to leave for Brussels any moment.

ALBA

I'm ready, Sire.

KING

Your orders and authority are sealed.
Go to the Queen and take your leave and bid farewell to Carlos.

ALBA

Your Majesty appears disturbed. The subject of your conversation— was it so sensitive?

KING

The subject was the Duke of Alba. *(Looking at him with a sinister mien)*
I don't mind hearing that Carl hates my councilors, but it dismays me to discover his contempt for them. *(Alba wants to protest.)* Don't answer now. I want you to make peace with Carlos.

ALBA

Sire?

KING

That is my wish. Tell me, who was it that first warned me of my son's attempt against me?

[Don Carlos]

You were the only one I listened to.
Perhaps, he had deserved a hearing, too.
From now on, Duke, Carlos will be closer
to the throne. And now leave me.
(Alba exits quickly.)

[II-2]

SCENE TWO: *The Sitting Room of Princess Eboli.*

Princess Eboli is sitting on a sofa playing the lute, as one of the Queen's Pages enters.

EBOLI (jumps up and goes toward him)

Well, is he on his way?

PAGE

Why yes, Princess. I am surprised he hasn't come yet. He should be here, however, any moment.

EBOLI

Are you quite sure?

PAGE

Yes, Princess. He followed me directly. You should have seen him when I handed him your note. He was beside himself. There is no doubt, the Prince has got it badly—

EBOLI

Was he surprised? And did he read the note immediately? What did he say, what were the words he used? And what about the key? What did he do with it? He must have guessed at once from whom it came, isn't that right? Well, answer me. You've never been so slow.

PAGE

I'm waiting for a chance to get a word in, Princess. I handed him your note and key in the west corridor where no one was nearby. And when I told him that a lady sent me, you should have seen his face!

EBOLI

Did he seem pleased— or agitated— or what was his reaction?

PAGE

Well, first he asked me, not just once but three or four times, if she herself had given me the letter—

EBOLI

If I myself— Did he mention my name?

[Don Carlos]

PAGE

Your name? No, I don't think so. He didn't say your name, but he admonished me to silence. There could, he said, be spies around who might inform the King—

EBOLI

He said that?

PAGE

The King, he said, is always interested in notes or messages to him, the Prince. He called this note a risky matter and cautioned me to be on guard so no one would get wind of it.

EBOLI

That's understandable. But do go on—he read the note then, didn't he?

PAGE

He read it twice and then he said that it contained such happy news as he had never dared to hope for—

EBOLI

How wonderful! What else?

PAGE

Unfortunately, then the Duke of Alba was approaching. He asked the Prince for a few words, necessitating my departure—

EBOLI

The Duke of Alba? What on earth could he have wanted? That's very strange. But did the Prince say he would come at once?

PAGE

He seemed so anxious that I thought he would be here before me. But then, it could be that the Duke delayed him—

EBOLI

The Duke! The Duke! He could have left him stand there. Really, the Prince, it seems, knows love as poorly as he understands a woman's patience. He doesn't know what minutes mean. But quiet! I hear footsteps. Away— quickly.

(The Page hurries out. She settles on the sofa, picks up

[II-2]

her lute and plays. Not long thereafter, Don Carlos enters.)

CARLOS

Good God! Where am I?

EBOLI

Prince Carlos— what surprise!

CARLOS

This is unforgivable! I must have missed the door. I can't imagine how—

EBOLI

This is the wrong door, then? How clever of the Prince to find rooms where ladies are without attendants—

CARLOS

Forgive me, Princess, I saw the antechamber open—

EBOLI

Can that be possible? It seems that I myself have locked it.

CARLOS

Perhaps you meant to lock it, but you didn't. In any case, it shouldn't be important. As I was passing by, I heard the playing of a lute. I love music and especially the lute. It was impossible to pass the door without paying my compliment to such an accomplished player—

EBOLI

I appreciate a cavalier who will enmesh himself in such a story to save a lady from embarrassment.

CARLOS

Princess, I fear I'm making things much worse by trying to improve them. I'm not much good at parlor games. Forgive me this invasion of your privacy which I will try to remedy by my departure.

EBOLI

That was unkind, my Prince.

[Don Carlos]

CARLOS

Princess, I know I must have startled you,
and I respect the way you minimize this fact.
Shame on the man who is encouraged by
a woman's blush. As for myself, I tend
to lose my courage when a lady seems
to fear me.

EBOLI

Really? A conscience without parallel
for a young man, and a Crown Prince at that. Now
you must stay a while, for such impeccable
behavior is precisely what is needed
by a lady who's been badly frightened.
Are you aware that you have interrupted
my favorite song? I'll have to start again.
Your punishment, dear Prince, shall be to listen.
*(She beckons him to sit down; he does so reluctantly at
the other end of the sofa from her. She plays a few
bars on the lute, humming to the melody.)*

CARLOS

This punishment was even more delightful
than my offense of trespassing. I could
quite easily hear it again. It is
a love song, isn't it?

EBOLI

Why, Prince! It's just a ballad of a girl
who, in the long nights of winter, yearns for spring.

CARLOS

Isn't that love? Each longing certainly
contains the seeds of passion.

EBOLI

You surprise me, Prince, with such a touching
view. As for myself, I'm not inclined quite
so romantically.

CARLOS

I rather doubt if you and I, Princess,
would ever understand each other, as
far as love's concerned.

(As she appears startled, he tries to mollify.)

Who would believe it
of these rosy cheeks that passion ever
left its devastating mark? Only the

[II-2]

one loving without hope really knows love.

EBOLI

Be still, that sounds just terrible. And such
a fate seems to pursue you, more than others?
You aren't happy, Prince? Something disturbs you.
What could it be? What reason could you have
to grieve, Carlos? With everything nature
bestowed upon you, with every claim upon
the joys of life? A great King's son and more,
much more, endowed with qualities so bright
that they outshine even your princely rank.
The man whom nature and the world have favored
more than anyone, should not be happy?
Has heaven, then, who gave you everything
denied you eyes with which to see it?

*CARLOS (has been completely absent minded and is now
startled by the silence)*

Superb, Princess, just excellent, you must
sing it again for me—

EBOLI (getting up)

What is the matter, Prince? Your mind is somewhere else!

CARLOS (jumping up)

Yes, yes, by God, you are reminding me
I must be off—

EBOLI

Heavens, where to, in such a hurry?

CARLOS

Outside— Please let me go, Princess. I feel
as if the world is closing in on me.

EBOLI

Why suddenly this strange behavior, Prince?
You need to rest, you are excited. Come,
sit down here next to me. *(She virtually pulls him back onto the sofa.)*
What in the world
could weigh you down to such extent. And if
you know the reason, is there not someone
here at court to help you ease this burden?

CARLOS

Perhaps the Princess Eboli—

[Don Carlos]

EBOLI

You mean that?

CARLOS

Why shouldn't I? It wouldn't be so hard—

EBOLI

You talk in riddles, Prince. But I am certain I could help. Give me a chance to prove it, and as a start, tell me what's depressing you.

CARLOS

Perhaps it is no longer news to you. I've had the notion for some time of going to Brabant, if for no other reason than to earn my spurs. But, my father doesn't want it. He chose the Duke of Alba over me. He is, no doubt, concerned that, were I to command armies, my singing voice might suffer.

EBOLI

Be realistic, Carl. If the King has chosen Alba, then accept it. Everyone knows he doesn't change his mind. Don't be upset, the future will hold many opportunities for you to prove yourself. But is that all?

CARLOS

All, Princess? What more do you expect?

EBOLI

A woman's intuition extends beyond the obvious. Does Carlos simply grieve because his princely aspirations are frustrated? Or is there something else?

CARLOS

You are not easily deceived, dear Princess. But then, deception was not my intent. You are a woman of the world. Your heart is generous, and yet warm blood flows through your veins— the same that flows through mine—

EBOLI

Yes, Prince, it seems we have that much in common—

CARLOS

A great deal more than that!

[II-2]

EBOLI

Enlighten me, dear friend. I feel I stand
before a bolted vault, locked so securely
that every key at my disposal fails me—

CARLOS

So you appear to me.

EBOLI (after a brief pause, walking about the room)

I would have left this court, this kind of life
and sought my peace behind the sacred walls,
were it not for a single bond that ties
me to this world. Perhaps it's an illusion,
but even if it were, it's so important,
so essential to my life. You see, I love—
love deeply— but my love is not returned.

CARLOS

You must be wrong, it is. You are being loved!
What man can see you, look at you, and claim
he's never been in love?

EBOLI

Oh Carlos, do you mean that? Or did my
guardian angel's voice give me that answer?

CARLOS

This was no angel's voice. No, it was mine.
And for the first time, do I see you as you
are: a fine and admirable girl.

EBOLI

My dear friend! At last I feel the strength within
me to speak out. I can no longer keep
my secret to myself. You are a noble man,
Carlos, and you are kind. You alone can
help me, and should I be beyond your help—
at least, give me your tears to comfort me—

CARLOS

Speak out, my dear—

EBOLI

The Count of Silva, Ruy Gomez, a man
of insolence, crude, and of bad taste, but
currently in favor with the King, is
courting me and seeks my hand. The King has
blessed this marriage and all but sealed the
bargain. I have been sold to him.

[Don Carlos]

CARLOS

Sold to that scoundrel? That's outrageous!

EBOLI

It's not enough to sacrifice me to
political expediency. No, my
virtue is at stake as well. Till now, my
pride served to protect me, but how much longer
can a helpless girl resist—

CARLOS

You haven't given in—

EBOLI

It isn't that. But how contemptible
it seems to put a price on virtue, and
on love as well, as if it were no more than
merchandise. Love is the only thing on
earth that has no buyer than itself: love
is the price of love. Call it a whim
or vanity, or what you want, but for
the world, I cannot portion out my love.
To the one man I've chosen, I'll give my
everything, but to no one else—

CARLOS

This is incredible! A girl so pure—
so indescribably attractive, here at
Philip's court. Here among priests and favor
seekers— this is no climate for a lady.
Oh, I can well believe they want you, but
they shan't. (*Drawing her to him*) Let me protect you.

EBOLI

How little did I know you, dearest Carlos.
(*To prevent him from kissing her, she takes his hand.*)
Oh what a graceful hand, how gentle yet how rich.
It has so much to give: a crown and
Carlos' heart. And maybe both to one.
Almost too great a present for one mortal.
Or have you ever thought about dividing it?
Queens are bad lovers, so I'm told, and women
who can love don't wear a crown too well.
Why not divide the prize? Perhaps you've given
it some thought. And could it be, I even
know the lucky one?

CARLOS

You shall! For at this count, you are the only

[II-2]

girl who reads my heart, so you alone shall know.
Yes, I'm in love. I won't deny it any longer.

EBOLI

Why, you bad boy! So difficult was this
admission? I had to get your sympathy
before you would confess your love?

CARLOS (startled)

What? What did you say?

EBOLI

Playing such games with me! Really, Carlos,
it wasn't nice. And even to deny
the key I sent you.

CARLOS

The key? Of course, the key. Yes, now I
understand— (*holding on to a chair*) Dear God in Heaven—

EBOLI

What have I done! Oh, how detestable—

CARLOS

So quickly cast away from paradise—
that is dreadful. Please Princess, can you try—
can you forgive this most deplorable
mistake?

EBOLI

For heaven's sake, leave me alone— Get out of here—

CARLOS

And leave you in this state?

EBOLI

Please go, unless you want to kill me. I
cannot stand the sight of you.

(Carlos walks toward the door.)

But give me back my key—

*(He turns around and takes it from his pocket. She walks
toward him and he hands it to her. As he does so,
sadness overtakes her anger.)*

Oh Prince, what have you done to me?

CARLOS

Believe me, Princess, I am deeply sorry—
I didn't mean to hurt your feelings.

[Don Carlos]

EBOLI (grabbing his arm)

Then stay a little longer— Stay just one
more minute—

CARLOS

No, Princess, I have stayed too long already.
Farewell.

*(He frees himself and rushes out. She stands defeated
for a while. But then, she pulls herself together and
gradually takes on an expression of determination.
She walks slowly to her desk and rings a bell. A
moment later, the Page enters.)*

PAGE

Has the Prince left already?

EBOLI (her back toward him, icily)

The Prince left long ago. *(After a pause she turns to him.)*
Go to His Reverence, the priest Domingo.
And tell him that I want to meet with him
at four o'clock.

PAGE

Will he know where, My Lady?

EBOLI

The same location as before. He will
remember.

[II-3]

SCENE THREE: A Colonnade in the Palace.

The Duke of Alba and Domingo enter together.

DOMINGO

What did you want to tell me, Duke?

ALBA

A matter of significance on which
I want your view. I ran into Prince Carlos
earlier this morning near the apartment
of the Queen, from whom I took my leave.
We briefly talked about my new appointment
to the Netherlands when he became
insulting. Despite my great reluctance,
he insisted that I fight him. I didn't
want to, mind you, but he drew his sword
against me. I responded, purely in self
defense, when suddenly the Queen appeared,
summoned by the sound of clanking swords.
When seeing Carlos, she ordered him to stop.
In doing so, she caught his eye. That look
she gave him, father, that brief and startled
look, was quite enough to give away an
intimate relationship. That single glance
sufficed to make him drop his sword and
run into my arms, mumbling some words
about forgiveness. A second later,
he was gone.

DOMINGO

That is most interesting. I must confess
that, for some time, similar fears possessed
me, fears that I've tried to shy away from.
I have not shared these thoughts with anyone,
biding my time. To render certain services
to kings can be quite dangerous, just like
a shot that, missing its target, can strike
the marksman down. In this respect, I find
it most regrettable that this is Spanish soil.

ALBA

Why's that?

DOMINGO

Because at any other court emotions
are allowed to run their course. Here, they're

[Don Carlos]

protected by most careful laws. A Spanish queen would find it difficult to sin. That makes it hard for us to prove adultery.

ALBA

There is still more. The Prince, this morning, had an audience with the King. He begged to let him go to Brussels in my place. He begged most forcefully. The King invited me to wait in his own study from where I heard it all. He was in tears when it was over. Then, later this morning, he appeared triumphant to the point of insolence. He said he was delighted that the King had chosen me for the appointment he had sought so eagerly. 'Things have changed,' he said, 'and for the better.' The Prince could never feign emotions, yet how can one explain this contradictory behavior? Is this appointment more a banishment for me than evidence of favor from the King?

DOMINGO

That would be very bad indeed. Endangering in one moment what we have built in years! And you're so calm, so unconcerned? Do you know this boy and what we could expect from him when he will wear the crown? I'm not his adversary, but great concern befalls me for the throne, as well as for the Church. I know the Prince, I sense his deepest thoughts. As monarch, his most urgent task will be to deny the Church and to deprive us of the faith. He is obsessed by new ideas that, quite sufficient in themselves, will never be subordinate to dogma. He is beset by the strange notion that Man is all important and that the monarchy must serve mankind. I have the gravest doubt that he is fit to rule.

ALBA

These are no more than fantasies, perhaps some youthful spite. But that will pass with time.

DOMINGO

I'm not so sure. He is too independent and unaccustomed to the discipline

[II-3]

so essential for control of others.
I've tried to modify his rebel spirit,
but I have failed. With Carlos on the throne,
Spain, as we know it, will be in jeopardy.

ALBA

I hope you're wrong, but then— you rarely are!

DOMINGO

And what is more, he and the Queen are of
a single mind. Both are inflamed by thoughts
of innovation, and though these are still
budding for the present, with opportunity
they could present a threat. The Queen is a
Valois— I know them well. We have to be
prepared for vengeance by this cool-headed
foe, whenever Philip's weakness should present
the chance. But luck still favors us. Hence,
we must grab it while there is still time. So,
let us now apprise the King of this new
danger, whether there's proof or not. The point
clearly must be to instill doubt— distrust
in those who're closest to his throne. If we
succeed, the fate of both is sealed.

ALBA

The most important question yet remains
unanswered: who will be the one to tell
the King?

DOMINGO

Not you nor I. My plan includes another—
a third, perhaps the most important member.
(*secretively*) The King worships the Princess Eboli.
His passion suits my purpose, for as his
intermediary, I can acquaint her
with our plan. She'll be a strong and faithful
ally and— should we be successful— perhaps
our Queen. One starry night could finish
our work: the lily of Valois crushed by
a Spanish rose!

ALBA

Why, this is masterful! You have my
admiration, priest. If we succeed, we
may have saved the Spanish empire. —
I think, someone is coming.

[Don Carlos]

DOMINGO

It's she, the Princess. I am to meet her here. Go quickly. I will call you later.

(Exit Alba. Princess Eboli enters from the opposite side.)

I'm at your service, gracious Princess.

EBOLI

Are we alone? Someone just left— who was it?

DOMINGO

The Duke of Alba, Princess. He seeks to have a word with you after we've finished.

EBOLI

Alba? What could he have to tell me?

DOMINGO

That he may want to say himself. But to what happy circumstance can I ascribe the long-awaited honor of seeing you again? Is it perhaps that now His Majesty can dare expect a change of heart?

EBOLI

Have you transmitted to the King my last response?

DOMINGO

I had intended to delay the bitter news as long as possible. There is still time, Princess, to temper your reply—

EBOLI

Then tell the King— I shall expect him.

DOMINGO

You are quite serious?

EBOLI

Never more so. But you seem startled. Does it surprise you?

DOMINGO

The King will be most pleased, of course, but as for me, I do not understand—

EBOLI

You're not supposed to, father. Let it suffice that this is my decision. And for your comfort, I can add that you are not a

[II-3]

party to this wrong, and neither is the Church.
Please ask the King not to mistake this action
on my part. I am the same I was. When I
rejected him at first, I thought him happy
as the husband of a lovely Queen whom
I considered worthy of my sacrifice.
But that was then. Now I know better.

DOMINGO

Please, do go on, dear Princess. I think, we
understand each other.

EBOLI

She has been caught! I will no longer spare her.
I have discovered her for what she is.
She has betrayed the King, the whole of Spain—
and me! The King has been defrauded, and I'll
bring proof to make her tremble. I will tear
down that mask of sacrifice— of grand denial
of the flesh— and all the world shall know her.
The price I paid for this discovery was great.
My only satisfaction is that, in the
end, she'll have to pay still more— much more.

DOMINGO

This is the type of news I didn't dare
expect. Now our plan's complete. You will
permit me— I must call the Duke.

(He goes offstage briefly and returns with Alba.)

Duke, our tidings are no longer news.
The Princess came here to disclose
intelligence we had intended to
reveal to her.

ALBA

That is most fortunate.

DOMINGO

Even more. The Princess is prepared to
offer proof of our common secret to
the King.

ALBA

Good. Very good. But time is of the essence.
The King must be informed at once. Who else
than the Princess is better qualified?

DOMINGO

You have the great advantage, Princess, not

[Don Carlos]

to be silenced by official duties.
You can speak freely where our lips are sealed.
Your word can be the opener; we will complete
the rest.

ALBA

The King knows well I am the Prince's foe.
Therefore, the news must come from someone less
committed. But every minute counts. I can
expect to leave for Brussels any time—

DOMINGO (to the Princess)

Do you suppose there might be letters from
the Prince we could produce? Such letters could
be most effective. Is it not right, your chambers
are adjoining the apartment of the Queen?

EBOLI

That's right. Why do you ask?

DOMINGO

Someone adept with keys could easily—
Perhaps you know just where the keys to the
Queen's private chests are kept?

EBOLI

I'm rather sure they could be located—

DOMINGO

The Queen has many servants. Though money
could be useful, there is a certain risk
involved—

EBOLI

Leave it to me. I think I know a way
to get this type of evidence. I'll let
you know—

DOMINGO (softly to her)

Meanwhile, may I tell His Majesty the
hour when he is expected?

EBOLI

In a few days, I shall take ill. This way,
I will be out of contact with the Queen,
and I'll stay in my chambers. The King may
know this—

DOMINGO

Splendid! Let this be the beginning of

[II-3]

great happenings. And in this knowledge
let us part for now, lest we be seen
together—

EBOLI

You'll hear from me quite soon.

(She walks away quickly.)

DOMINGO (after a brief pause)

Duke, with these trumps in our hands: this rose
here and your battles—

ALBA (darkly)

Do not forget your God! And so let us
await the lightning that may strike us down!

(They go away.)

ACT THREE

SCENE ONE: *The King's Study.*

It is late at night. The King, informally dressed in a robe, is sitting in a armchair, with some papers in his hand.

KING (after a long pause of meditation)

That she had wanted love— who could deny it?
I gave her all I had— Was it enough?
And yet, has she complained— or ever said
a word to me she wasn't happy? Why
had she not? Because she's false— deceitful?
Is she really? But these letters prove it.
She is false, and she has deceived me! *(As if awakening from a dream)* Where was I? The night is almost over.
No chance for sleep now any more. I am
awake— *(getting up)* I am the King— and so it shall
be day. *(He opens the door.)* Is everyone asleep?
(Count Lerma rushes in.)

LERMA

Your Majesty— Are you alright?

KING

Yes, yes. I am alright. All that uproar
in the Queen's apartment— haven't you heard it?

LERMA

No, Your Majesty.

KING

No, no? Could it be that I imagined it?

LERMA

I'm positive, Your Majesty, there was no noise—

KING

I don't believe it. And if it was a dream—
it frightened me. From now on, Count, the guard
around the Queen's apartment is to be
doubled. But do it secretly. The Queen
is not to know. What is it, Count— why are
you staring at me?

LERMA

I see two restless eyes that beg for sleep—

[III-1]

KING

Sleep? I'll save that for the Escorial.
A monarch puts his crown in jeopardy
while he's asleep. Just as a sleeping husband
risks his wife's affection— No, no, it isn't
true. It was a woman who accused her.
There is no proof until a man confirms it.
The Duke of Alba— call him, and my priest
as well!

(Lerma opens a door and relays the order to a page.)

Come closer, Count. Tell me the truth,
upon your oath! I've been deceived— isn't that so?

LERMA

My liege! My King, so great and wise—

KING

King, King, nothing but King! No better answer
than an empty echo! Can't you see— I'm striking
at a rock and want water for my feverish
thirst, and all I get is flowing gold!

LERMA

Your Majesty was asking for the truth—

KING

The truth! No, no more. Forget it. You're dismissed.
(Lerma bows and prepares to leave.)

You are a husband and father, is
that not right?

LERMA

Yes, Your Majesty.

KING

You are a married man and yet you dare
to spend the night away from home to guard
your King? Your hair is gray, and yet you still
trust in a woman's virtue? Go home, then,
for this very moment your wife may practice
incest with your son! Take it from me, your
King, go home. You stand there thunderstruck—
you stare at me, because I, too, am gray?
Watch out! The honor of a queen must be
above suspicion, and if you doubt her
virtue— you are doomed.

LERMA (fiery)

Who can doubt her, Sire? Who in all the realm

[Don Carlos]

would dare to doubt the faultless virtue of
the Queen, the best of women—

KING

The best— the best of women? She has, it seems
some faithful friends at court. That must have cost
her much— more than I knew she had to give.
Enough now, leave me. The Duke should be here
presently.

LERMA

I hear him coming—
(He bows again and is about to leave.)

KING

Count! What you observed before was right. My head
is feverish from a sleepless night. Forget
then what I said. I had an ugly dream.
Forget it, do you hear? I am your— gracious King.
*(He holds out his hand which Lerma kisses. Then he opens
the door and lets the Duke of Alba in. Exit Count Lerma.)*

ALBA

Your Majesty surprised me with this summons
at such extraordinary hour— *(noticing the King's disturbed face)*
and this look—

KING

It's true, then, isn't it? I have no really
faithful servant?

ALBA

I do not understand, Your Majesty.

KING

I've suffered a grave injury— of such
deadly nature that it is hard for me
to bear and go on living! And yet, there
was no one, not a single soul, to warn me.

ALBA

Injured, Your Majesty— and I am unaware—

KING (holding up a letter)

Do you recognize this hand?

ALBA

It is Prince Carlos' writing.

[III-1]

KING

You still do not suspect? And you have warned
me of his zeal, his appetite for power,
his ambition? And was that all I had to fear?

ALBA

I do not understand—

KING (handing him several letters)

Then read!

ALBA

Who was the wretch to place these in my Monarch's hands?

KING

You seem to understand the meaning well enough,
although the subject's name is carefully
avoided.

ALBA (after a moment's hesitation)

I don't deny it. Yes, Sire, I know the
person meant.

KING

Then this affair is so well known that it is
recognized at a mere hint? This is too much!
Am I the last to know that my whole empire
is in jeopardy?

ALBA

I must admit, my liege, that I have thought
it wiser to choose silence. I see now,
this was bad judgment on my part. But too much
was at stake to bring this matter up without
conclusive evidence. May I speak freely now?

KING

You may.

ALBA

Your Majesty will probably recall
the incident that happened in Aranjuez.
The Queen alone, deserted by her ladies—

KING

Yes, yes—

ALBA

The Marquise Mondecarr took on herself
the blame for leaving her. The facts were

[Don Carlos]

different, however. The Marquise had been sent away, because the Prince had come to see the Queen.

KING

What? Carlos— there?

ALBA

Without a doubt, Your Majesty. The Prince was seen leaving the area just moments prior to Your Majesty's arrival—

KING

And she affronted me before my court! With her display of untouched virtue, she made me look like the condemned. Oh, I've been blind—

ALBA

Sire, this in itself is not entirely conclusive—

KING

It is as clear as day to me. Her sin began the moment I received her in Madrid. I see her still, her eyes dwelling with terror on my graying temples. There it began— her fraud and her adultery!

ALBA

Don Carlos lost a bride in his young mother. Don't be too harsh on him, Your Majesty. As for the Queen, she came to Spain expecting love, yet she received a crown instead.

KING

You make a fine distinction here, I notice with dismay, although one expectation need not cancel out the other. But you are candid, and for that I thank you. Moreover, you are right. The Queen did wrong not to reveal the contents of these letters and to withhold from me this most improper visit by the Prince. That was an act of great disloyalty to me. With that offense I know just how to deal. That will be all for now. You are excused.

ALBA

In my eagerness to serve, have I displeased Your Majesty a second time?

[III-1]

KING

You know yourself you've failed me. But this time
you're forgiven.

(He rings a bell and a page enters.)

Father Domingo may now enter.

*(The page bows and goes out, followed by the Duke of Alba.
A moment later, Domingo enters. The King walks slowly
back and forth without looking at him.)*

DOMINGO (after a while)

I am most pleased to see Your Majesty
so well. My fear, thank goodness, was unfounded.

KING

Your fear? What fear?

DOMINGO

I won't deny, Your Majesty, that I am conscious
of a matter— of a most secret character—

KING

I have not indicated that I am inclined
to share with you this matter. To bring it up
is most presumptuous.

DOMINGO

Of indiscretion I'm not guilty, Sire.
I have acquired knowledge of this matter
through the confessional. I break the seal
of confidence only because I fear the
empire would suffer, should I preserve
my silence. The matter I'm alluding to,
oppressed the conscience of the penitent
who had discovered it. But now, alas
too late, the Princess Eboli deplores
the deed that may, she fears, bear dreadful
consequences for the Queen.

KING

She does? That gentle heart! But you are right
to guess the reason for my summons. I'm
asking you to lead me from the labyrinth
wherein I strayed, driven by powerful
emotions. Be frank with your advice. From
your high office I expect the truth.

DOMINGO

I would beseech Your Majesty to end
right here the search into a secret

[Don Carlos]

that can produce nothing but misery.
What is known can be forgiven. One word
from you suffices— and the Queen has never
left the path of righteousness. The Monarch's
will can create virtue just as it can
great fortune. And only your serenity
can quell the rumors that are the work of
slander.

KING

Rumors? What kind of rumors?

DOMINGO

Lies, damnable lies, of course. But even lies,
when readily accepted by the people,
can be as formidable as the truth.

KING

Come to the point, Domingo. What lies have
come between me and my people?

DOMINGO

Unblemished reputation is one thing
for which a Queen competes on equal terms
with any burgher's wife.

KING

If I'm to hear bad news from you, then out
with it. Don't strain my patience any longer.

DOMINGO

I must repeat, my liege, the people can
be wrong. Their gossip must not agitate
the King. Nevertheless, their boldness—

KING

First I implore you for your poison?

DOMINGO

The people still recall the time which brought
you, Sire, to the edge of death. And yet,
precisely nine months later to the day,
the court announced the birth of the infant.

*(The King gets up abruptly, rings a bell, and the Duke
of Alba enters.)*

I am astonished, Sire!

KING

Duke, you are a man of flesh and blood—

[III-1]

protect me from this priest—

DOMINGO (exchanging glances with the Duke)

If I had known Your Majesty would blame
the bringer of these tidings—

KING

A bastard— that is what you said? I barely
had recovered from a brush with death when
she conceived? And was that not the time when
you gave thanks to Saint Dominic
for my miraculous recovery?
What you had then proclaimed a miracle
is not one now? So, were you lying then
or at this moment? But I can see through you.
If your conspiracy had been ripe then,
the Saint would have been cheated of his glory—

ALBA

Conspiracy? No, no, Your Majesty—

KING

You meet here in such harmony of mind
and dare pretend to act not in collusion?
Was I expected not to note the greed—
the eagerness with which you fell upon
your prey? Should I have failed to note the zeal
with which you, Duke, contended for the favors
that were, by right, my son's? And how this pious
man seeks to direct my wrath to suit his
petty grudge?

ALBA

Surely, Your Majesty, our loyalty deserves
a better fate—

KING

What loyalty? What service have you rendered me?
Or is the King condemned to be surrounded
by false servants who willingly distort
reality for their own purpose? Can't
he expect fidelity— not even that—
for his own sake?— If what you have inferred
is true, then what is left for me? The
agony of separation, the sorry triumph
of revenge? What do you care? You only
seed suspicion and hope to reap a harvest
to your own advantage, while leaving me
alone to stand here at the brink of hell!

[Don Carlos]

DOMINGO

Sire, what other proof is possible, when your own eyes deny the evidence?

KING (after a pause)

I shall assemble all the Grandees of my Kingdom, and in their presence, I will sit in judgment. Step you forward then and charge her with adultery! And if she's guilty, she shall die— and Carlos with her. But mark you well— it she can cleanse herself of your accusation, then you yourself shall die. Or is this price too high just for the sake of truth? Make up your mind. You say nothing? Have I exposed the liar's zeal?

ALBA

I accept your terms.

KING

A bold reply. Bold as a soldier. But, as a soldier, have you not risked your life for lesser things? How often have you gambled it for nothing more than glory? What does life mean to you? No, royal blood is much too precious to be traded for a soldier's life, whose hope is for a flash of triumph in which to sacrifice it. No, Duke, I reject your offer. — The night is over now. Leave me, and in the audience chamber wait for my further orders.

(Exit Alba and Domingo.)

[III-2]

SCENE TWO: *The Audience Chamber*

Carlos is conversing with the Prince of Parma; the Duke of Feria, Don Raimond of Taxis, and other Grandees are in the background. The Duke of Medina Sidonia is talking with Count Lerma, as the Duke of Alba enters.

MEDINA SIDONIA *(goes toward Alba)*

You've seen the King this morning. How is he disposed?

ALBA

Quite badly, I'm afraid, for what you have to tell him.

(He walks away from him quickly and joins Feria and the others.)

MEDINA SIDONIA

I found it easier to face the cannons of the English fleet— than this court.

(Carlos who had observed his brief encounter with Alba now approaches him and offers him his hand. The Prince of Parma follows him but stands back.)

Thank you, my Prince, for this well-meaning gesture. You see how everyone deserts me. My downfall is assured.

CARLOS

I don't believe that, Duke. Dismiss such thoughts. My father's fairness and your lack of blame are on your side.

MEDINA SIDONIA

I've lost a fleet for him, the like of which never before has graced an ocean. What is my head compared with seventy sunk galleons? But, Prince, five sons, as promising as you, lost— that is what breaks my heart—

(The King enters in full regal attire. All uncover themselves and bow as he passes them.)

KING

Please be covered. *(To the Prince of Parma)* Your mother, nephew, asks if we are pleased with you here in Madrid.

PARMA

She shouldn't ask that until after my first encounter on the battlefield—

[Don Carlos]

KING

Be patient, nephew. Your turn will come.

(He goes to the throne and takes his seat.)

(To the Duke of Feria) What do you bring us, Duke?

FERIA *(steps before the throne and bends on one knee)*

The Grand Commander of the Royal Order

of Calatrava passed away this morning.

I have the honor to return his ensign

to Your Majesty.

KING *(accepts the order and scans the entire semicircle)*

Who shall be the one to wear it after him
with honor?

*(He motions the Duke of Alba to approach who genuflects
before the King.)*

You are our first commander, Duke. Seek
never to be more and you will find yourself
not ever short of our favor.

(Alba receives the order and withdraws.)

I see our Admiral is here.

*(Medina Sidonia slowly approaches the throne, his head
cast down; then he kneels before the King.)*

MEDINA SIDONIA

This, my great King, is all that I bring back
to you of the Armada and of the gallant
youth of Spain.

KING *(after a long silence)*

God is above me. I have sent you out
to battle men and ships. I have no power
over stormy seas or raging gales or
deadly cliffs— Be welcome in Madrid.

*(He holds out his hand which Medina Sidonia kisses
fervently.)*

And thanks that you preserved for me a loyal
servant— and as such I want him recognized,
my Grantees.

(He motions him to rise and to withdraw.)

What other business is there before us?

(To Carlos and Parma) Thank you, my Princes.

*(Carlos and Parma bow and exit. Some of the other
Grantees hand him papers which he scans briefly,
then hands to Alba.)*

Submit these to us later.

[III-2]

Are we now finished? (*There is no answer.*) How is it that
among you we never find the Marquis
Posa? He's served us well. Why is he never here?

LERMA

The cavalier has only recently
returned from widespread travels throughout
Europe. He is at present in Madrid,
waiting for public audience when he can
pay his tribute to the King.

ALBA

The Marquis Posa? That is the gallant
knight of Malta whose bravery was
legendary at Saint Elmo, yet after
his heroic deeds went back to Alcala
to complete his studies.

FERIA

The same also uncovered the infamous
plot in Catalonia and through his skill
preserved this most important province to
the Crown.

KING

We are amazed. What kind of man is he
who's done all that— and of three peers who speak
of him has not one envier? His
character must be extraordinary,
or he has none at all. If nothing else,
then sheer curiosity tempts us to see him.
(*To Alba*) After the mass, bring him to us.
(*To Feria*) Duke, take our place today in Privy
Council.

*(Feria bows deeply. The King rises from the throne
and walks out. Again, all Grandees take their hats
off and bow.)*

FERIA

The King has been most gracious.

MEDINA SIDONIA

He has been more than gracious, so much more.
To me— he was like God.

FERIA

The King was only just. You've earned his respect. (*Exit.*)

[Don Carlos]

ALBA

Yes, he was just— no more than just. (*Exit.*)

LERMA

How rich you have become! Two royal words
have changed the world for you.

(*All exit.*)

[III-3]

SCENE THREE: *The King's Study*

Enter the Marquis Posa and the Duke of Alba.

POSA

I still cannot believe the King wants me.
It must be a mistake.

ALBA

It's no mistake. He wants to meet you. The
King is in your hands. Utilize this moment
as well as possible. If you do not,
it will be no one's fault but yours.

(Exit Alba.)

POSA

Well spoken, Duke. This moment must be used,
although I'm not yet sure for what. —
Is it a chance that brings me here to show
me my own image in these mirrors? A
mere chance? And yet, is it not chance that, like
a rough stone, takes on new life under the
sculptor's hand? Chance is the gift of providence,
and man must shape it to his purpose.

*(As he walks about the chamber, studying some of
paintings, the King enters. He remains at the door,
quietly observing Posa, then comes forward.)*

KING

Have you spoken with me previously?
*(Posa goes to the King, bends on one knee to kiss his
hand, then rises and looks him straight in the face.)*

POSA

No, Sire.

KING

You've rendered service to the Crown. Why then
deny yourself my gratitude? You've earned the
favor of your King. Why have you failed to claim it?

POSA

It's been a mere two days since I've returned to Spain.

KING

I'm not inclined to be indebted to
my subjects. Ask for a favor.

[Don Carlos]

POSA

I am content, Sire.

KING

I like a Spaniard to be proud. — You've left my services, I hear.

POSA

To make room for a better man.

KING

Regrettable. When men like you seek other occupations, the State is bound to be the loser. Perhaps you thought that there was no position worthy of your mind?

POSA

Oh no. I'm certain that a judge of character could tell at once what I'd be capable of doing and what not. I'm grateful to Your Majesty, however, for this most generous opinion. But— (*he pauses*)

KING

You hesitate?

POSA

Yes, Sire. I'm not prepared to speak my mind right now. When I gave up my service to the Crown, I thought I had dispensed with the necessity to justify my actions.

KING

So feeble are your reasons? Or what do you expect to gain by not revealing them?

POSA

Perhaps my life. — But if I had the choice between Your Majesty's disfavor or contempt, then I'd prefer to be remembered as a felon rather than a fool.

KING

You make me curious. What is on your mind?

POSA

I cannot be a servant of the King. (*The King looks at him with amazement.*) I don't want to deceive Your Majesty. Were you to favor me and give me office, you would prescribe my actions. You'd want merely

[III-3]

my arm, my courage in your battles, perhaps
my voice in council. Consent to actions
of the Crown would be my purpose. For me,
however, independence has a special
value. The deeds the Monarch would perform
through me could be my own. I could enjoy
the satisfaction of my own achievements
which, under your command, would be but duties.
In the creation of your realm, can you accept,
yes, even tolerate, other creators?
Most likely not. Should I then be content
as tool, when I myself could be a master?
I love mankind, yet in a monarchy I am
allowed to love no one but myself.

KING

This fire is commendable. You want to
do good deeds. Yet, whether you perform them
as a patriot under my banner, or
as an individual, should be the same.
Select the office in my Kingdom that
would do justice to your noble instinct.

POSA

I find none.

KING

What?

POSA

The actions you would have me do under
the royal name— would they contribute to
men's bliss? Are they the same that my compassion
for my fellow men could bring about? I am
afraid, my love for all humanity could place
the Crown's position into jeopardy.
My aim, Your Majesty, is different
from yours. For I believe, to please God means
to love mankind. And so, I'd like to bring
about a greater dignity— develop
traits in men that can be satisfied by
their own efforts. For only if man can
achieve a form of self respect, can truth
find its response. Man can't be happy— truly
happy— until he's learned to think. But could
the Crown permit that? And if not, should
I accept a compromise? Should I employ
the love I harbor for my fellow men—

[Don Carlos]

should I employ it to suppress them? No,
Sire, don't select me to enforce your
policies. I must refuse. I cannot be
a servant of the King.

KING

You are a Protestant.

POSA (after a moment's consideration)

No, Sire. Your faith is also mine. I fear
I am not being understood. The veil that
shrouds Your Majesty's innermost thoughts was
penetrated by my words, and so you think me
dangerous. But I am not, my King. My
aspirations end right here. (*He points at his chest.*)

KING

Am I the first to know you from this side?

POSA

From this side, yes.

KING

I must admit, it is an innovation.
I've had too much of flattery, so why
not try a sample of the opposite?
You have persuasion. Perhaps the time is ripe
for someone in my Government to voice
new thoughts, even if they clash with ours.

POSA

That is not what I meant. Change for the sake
of novelty has no appeal. It cannot
lift the yoke and only serves to make its
burden heavier. Sire, as I see it,
man must be made again— completely new.
That is a long and toilsome process, but
it could be begun, if those in power
would permit it.

KING

My subjects are content. If you would ask them,
the great majority would want no change.

POSA

I note with much distress the low esteem in
which Your Majesty holds human dignity.
And yet, your subjects are the very cause,
for they have stripped themselves of their

[III-3]

nobility as individuals and, by their own
accord, reduced themselves to vassals.
They're frightened by the power of the State.
As a result, they've given up the vision
of their own potential and now accept
the chains of force. And then, as comfort in
their misery, they adorn themselves with
cowardly philosophy. It is considered
virtuous to bear this yoke in silence,
without resistance. This is the world you rule!
This is the state in which it was delivered
to your predecessor, your great father.
How true— how **can** you hold men in esteem
who chose such form of mutilation!

KING

Go on!

POSA

You took man from the Creator's hand and
changed him into something of your own making.
You then became a God to this transformed
creature. But you yourself remained a man,
and as a mortal, you continue to
desire and to suffer. You need— you want—
and as a man, you crave compassion. Yet,
to a God, one can but pray, humble oneself,
and offer sacrifice. A pitiful
exchange— indeed a sad abuse of nature.
But since you have reduced man to your tool,
who then is left to keep you company
and share your lonely moments? But you've
accepted that— this is the price you pay for
playing God. — Please, Sire, let me go.
Dismiss me. My discourse carries me away.
My heart is full, and the temptation is
too strong to stand before the one man on
this earth to whom I want to bare it.

KING

Continue!

POSA

I feel, Sire, the value of all this—

KING

Go on! There is still more you want to say.

[Don Carlos]

POSA

Sire, I've just returned from Flanders and Brabant—
such blooming and such handsome provinces!
So strong and good these people are, and I thought
to be their king, that must be great, almost
divine. But then— I came across charred bones—
charred bones of men—

(He looks at the King who avoids his eyes.)

You're right— you had to! That you could do what
you found necessary had filled me with
some awesome admiration. It is a
pity, isn't it, that merely men, not
species of a higher kind write the world's
history. But Philip's era will make room
for more enlightened centuries where power
will be tempered with humanity.

KING

I have no quarrel with this century.
Look around you in my realm. My subjects
flourish here in never clouded peace.
It is that kind of peace I want for Flanders.

POSA

Peace of a churchyard! You hope to finish
what you have begun— hope to arrest the spring
that marked the current change of Christendom,
the spring that is rejuvenating the face
of this old earth. You want to stop— all by
yourself— the wheel of progress rolling with
full speed through Europe by throwing human
bodies in its way. You won't succeed.
Already thousands fled your Kingdom, poor
but free. And those who have escaped were
your most worthy citizens. With open arms
receives Elizabeth of England your
refugees. Barren lies Granada, its fields
abandoned. And jubilant does Europe watch
its enemy bleeding away from self-inflicted wounds.

(The King is moved; Posa moves closer to him.)

You want to sow for all eternity
and plant the seeds of death. You've built
a structure of ingratitude. In vain you've
fought the hard campaign with nature. In vain
you've sacrificed your life for purposes
destructive. Man is much more than what you
think of him. He will wake up from his extended

[III-3]

slumber, and he will claim his right. And your name, Sire, will be remembered along with Nero's and Busiris'. And that is hurting me, for you deserve much better. You were good.

KING

Can you be certain— after all you've said?

POSA

Yes, Sire, I repeat it. You were good. And now be great. Return to us what you have taken. The world is looking up. Among a thousand kings be one! (*He comes still closer to the King.*) Oh, if the eloquence of all those millions who're taking part in this great moment could give my lips greater persuasion. Give up this adoration that's defying nature. Set an example for all things great and good. Never before had one mortal so much to put to such a glorious use. All the kings of Europe pay homage to the Spanish name. Be the first among them. One pen stroke of your hand will re-create the earth. Give us spiritual freedom!

(*He falls to his knees before the King.*)

KING (turning away from him)

What strange fantasies! (*Turning to him*) Do get up—

POSA (gets up)

Look around you, Sire, in God's magnificent creation. It's based on freedom and how rich it is because of freedom. Of all His creatures not a single one is not born free. Your creation— how poor and small! The trembling of a leaf can scare the master of all Christendom. But you can still restore the greatness of your throne. Your subjects be once more what they were meant to be: the purpose of the Crown, bound by no other duty than by their brothers' equal rights. And when you have returned the dignity to man, when you have made your realm the happiest on earth, then, Sire, will it be your right to subjugate the world!

KING (after a brief pause)

I've let you finish, as it's obvious to me

[Don Carlos]

that, from your point of view, the world looks vastly different than to most men. Because of this, I won't apply to you the same standard of judgment as to others. Because of your restraint not to confide these thoughts to anyone— until this moment— I will forget what I have heard. And as a man older in years, not as your King, do I dismiss these views of an impetuous young man. But this fire that burns within you must be purified and put to better use before it will consume you. And so beware my inquisition— it would distress me—

POSA

Would it, Sire? Would it really?

KING (gazing at him with unmistakable liking)

I've never seen a man like you before. No, no, Marquis. I won't deny you have affected me. I won't be Nero— no, not against you. Continue as you are— and be the man you want to be— under my very eyes.

POSA

But what about my fellow citizens? My concern, Your Majesty, was not for me. Your subjects are my cause—

KING

No more of this, young man. I know you would think differently if you would know men as I do. As to yourself, this shall not be our last encounter. What can I do to oblige you to the Crown?

POSA

Let me be just as I am. What could I be to you, were you to buy me, Sire, with your favors?

KING

Such pride I cannot tolerate. From this day on, you shall be in my service. No objection— this is my command. (*Brief pause*) I sought you out as sovereign, although I need your service as a man. Despite the power of the throne, I am not happy.

[III-3]

As father and as husband both, good fortune
has eluded me.

POSA

Your son, your lovely wife should give you
every cause for joy. You are most fortunate.
You should be happy, Sire.

KING

That I am not has never been more clear
to me than now.

POSA

The Prince is pure of heart; I've never found
him otherwise.

KING

I have! Of what he has deprived me, no crown
can compensate. A queen— so gentle and
so innocent!

POSA

What insinuation, Sire. Who would dare—

KING

The world has dared, with all its slander! I
myself possess the evidence that unmistakably
condemns her, and more is still to come.
Nevertheless, I find it difficult, most
difficult, to give credence to this proof.
For after all, who are they that accuse her?
An Eboli, a priest who hates my son,
an Alba who seeks vengeance for his injured
pride? My wife is worth a great deal more
than the whole lot—

POSA

Sire, something in a woman's nature can
overcome all slander and all accusations.
It is superior to all other qualities—
that is her virtue.

KING

Marquis— I've needed such a man as you
for quite some time. You've stood before your King
and you've asked nothing for yourself— nothing.
This was a new experience. You will be
just, I know. Go then, seek out my son,
explore the Queen's conscience— I'll send you full

[Don Carlos]

authority to speak with her in private.
Whatever you report— I shall trust you.
But now, Marquis, leave me alone.
(He rings a bell.)

POSA

If I can leave Your Majesty with just
one hope fulfilled, this day will be the
finest of my life.

KING (holding out his hand to be kissed)

It is no lost one in my life.

*(Posa kisses his hand, then leaves quickly. Count
Lerma enters.)*

From now on, the Marquis will be admitted
unannounced.

ACT FOUR

SCENE ONE: Antechamber to the Queen's Quarters

Princess Eboli and other ladies-in-waiting are in the room as the Queen enters with the Duchess of Olivarez.

QUEEN (To the Duchess)

The key has not been found? That means the box will have to be forced open— and without delay.

(Princess Eboli approaches and curtsies.)

Welcome, dear Princess. I'm glad to see you up again. A little pale as yet—

EBOLI

The fever was quite weakening. It may still take a little while to get my strength back.

QUEEN

I've wanted so to visit you, but I was not allowed, of course—

OLIVAREZ

I'm sure the Princess did not lack for company—

QUEEN

That I'll believe. What is it, dear? You're shaking—

EBOLI

I'm sure it's nothing serious, but I would like permission to withdraw—

QUEEN

Of course, my dear. I hope, your illness wasn't worse than you've been leading us to think.
(To one of the ladies) Assist her.

EBOLI

Just some fresh air— that's all I need.

(She goes out, assisted by a Lady-in-Waiting. A Page enters and talks briefly with the Duchess of Olivarez.)

OLIVAREZ

The Marquis Posa, Majesty, is here.
He comes directly from the King.

[IV-1]

QUEEN

Please show him in.

(The Page opens the door and Posa enters.

There is the customary

kissing of her hand on bended knees. The Page leaves.)

What is His Majesty's command? May it be publicly—

POSA

My errand is directed to Your Majesty alone.

(The Queen motions all others to withdraw. Exit

the Duchess of Olivarez and the other ladies.)

QUEEN

I am amazed, Marquis. The King sent you to me?

POSA

Is that so odd, my Queen? It doesn't seem that way to me.

QUEEN

Then has the world turned upside down? You and the King— Frankly, Marquis, I think it's rather—

POSA

Strange? Perhaps. But stranger things are happening these days. Suppose, I had consented to conversion— tired of being an outsider at court? If one desires to serve men, is not the first requirement to join them? And who's so free of vanity as not to satisfy one's own ambition? Suppose, I had decided to further mine at court?

QUEEN

No, no, Marquis. Not even in jest would I accuse you of such a boyish notion. You're not a man who undertakes a task he couldn't finish.

POSA

That is a matter of opinion.

QUEEN

The worst I could accuse you of, is ambiguity— and I'm afraid it tends to alienate me.

POSA

That is the last thing I would want,

[Don Carlos]

Your Majesty.

QUEEN

Perhaps the King had not intended you to tell me what you are about to say?

POSA

Not so, my Queen. But my objective is not to deceive the King. I want to serve him well— more faithfully in fact than he has ordered me.

QUEEN

I recognize you now, you're more yourself again. Enough of this, however. How is the King?

POSA

Lonely. But since Your Majesty appears impatient, I'll be brief. It is the King's desire that you don't grant an audience to the ambassador from France today.

QUEEN

And that is all?

POSA

That is my only message from the King.

QUEEN

You make it sound, Marquis, as if this message is not the only one you carry.

POSA

Your Majesty is right. I've come here for another reason. Prince Carlos—

QUEEN

Yes— how is he?

POSA

Willing to risk his everything for what means most to him. I don't bring many words, but this will speak for him— (*He hands her a note.*)

QUEEN (after she has read it quickly)

He says that he must see me urgently. He doesn't give a reason. Will it make him happier to see with his own eyes that I am not much better off?

[IV-1]

POSA

No, but it may help to make him more decisive.

QUEEN

In what connection?

POSA

The Duke of Alba was appointed to command in Flanders.

QUEEN

Yes, so I've heard.

POSA

This doesn't leave the Prince much choice. Two things are clear, however: Carlos can't stay at court, nor must the sacrifice of Flanders be allowed.

QUEEN

And do you know how to prevent it?

POSA

Perhaps I do, though the prevention is as dangerous as the disease. But the predicament is desperate, and I see no alternative.

QUEEN

Go ahead—

POSA

I dare reveal this plan to you alone, my Queen— and only you could persuade Carlos. Of course, what one will call it sounds a little grim—

QUEEN

The right word is— rebellion?

POSA

Carlos must leave for Brussels secretly. The Flemish people are expecting him. The Netherlands will rise upon his word, and our cause will have its spark. Only the Crown Prince can defy the throne. What Philip has refused him in Madrid, he'll have to grant in Brussels.

[Don Carlos]

QUEEN

You saw the King this morning— and yet
you are so confident?

POSA

I am because I saw him.

QUEEN

Your plan is frightening me— but at the same
time it intrigues me. It's bold— maybe that's
why I like it. Does Carlos know?

POSA

Not yet. He'll have to hear it from your lips.

QUEEN

But he is so young. He lacks experience—

POSA

His youth is his advantage. Besides, waiting
for him in Brussels are such trusted men
as William of Orange and Count Egmont.
They are as shrewd in council as they're
feared in battle.

QUEEN

Yes, the idea's sound, and one thing is quite
clear: Carlos must act. The role he's playing here—
it hurts me deeply and it's crushing him.
Yes, he must act! France I can promise him—
and Savoy as well. Oh, the idea makes my
heart beat faster. But, dear Marquis, all
this requires money—

POSA

It is available.

QUEEN

There never is enough. I could be of some help—

POSA

Can I then give him hope for an encounter?

QUEEN

I want to think about it.

POSA

Carlos is anxious for an answer now, and I
have promised him not to go empty handed.
Two lines, Your Majesty, would lift his spirit—

[IV-1]

QUEEN (while she goes to a desk to write)
Will I be seeing you again?

POSA
Whenever you command.

QUEEN
In that case, I may never. — How happy I would
be, if freedom had one last refuge
and how proud if Carlos could achieve this.
(She hands him the note.) Yes, you can count on my support,
though, of necessity, it must be silent.

POSA
I knew I would find understanding here—
(The Duchess of Olivarez appears at the door.)

QUEEN (as it to a stranger)
Of course, Marquis, the King's desire is
my command. Please go now and assure him
of my reverence.
(Posa bows and leaves quickly.)

[Don Carlos]

SCENE TWO: Colonnade in the Palace.

Enter Carlos and the Count of Lerma together.

CARLOS

Here we are unobserved. What did you want to tell me?

LERMA

Your Royal Highness had a friend here—

CARLOS

Had? Have I lost him, then?

LERMA

I beg Your Highness' pardon for having learned more than was proper. But do not be concerned, I have it from a faithful source, for I myself found out about it—

CARLOS

To whom are you referring?

LERMA

The Marquis Posa—

CARLOS

Well?

LERMA

If anyone knew more of Your Highness' private life than was perhaps intended, as I'm inclined to fear—

CARLOS

What do you fear?

LERMA

He saw the King—

CARLOS

Well?

LERMA

For two full hours— and in most private conversation. Your name, my Prince, was mentioned.

CARLOS

That's no bad omen, I should hope.

[IV-2]

LERMA

When it was over, the King commanded me to admit him henceforth unannounced. This is unprecedented, Prince. Something like this has never happened in all the years I've served His Majesty.

CARLOS

Yes, that is strange.

LERMA

I've always known the Marquis as a man of honor.

CARLOS

You know him well, then.

LERMA

Nevertheless, my Prince, a man's honor remains untarnished only till the moment of the crucial test—

CARLOS

What are you implying?

LERMA

A favor from the King, so extraordinary, could constitute that test. On such a golden hook, many a virtue's bled to death.

CARLOS

But never his!

LERMA

That may be so. But often it is wiser to mingle friendship with a grain of salt. And if indeed he is a man of honor, then my suspicion would not tarnish him, and you, my Prince, are twice as rich.

CARLOS

Thank you, dear Count. I think I shall be three times richer, for I have gained another friend.

(He shakes his hand, then Lerma goes away. Carlos walks slowly and in thought in the opposite direction, when Posa appears.)

POSA (offstage)

Carlos!

[Don Carlos]

CARLOS

It is you! I'll meet you at the monastery
in the afternoon. There we can talk.

POSA

Wait just a minute. No one is around—

CARLOS

But speak softly. You saw my father—

POSA

Yes, he sent for me.

CARLOS

Well?

POSA

I saw the Queen this morning. She will meet you—

CARLOS

What did my father want?

POSA

Not much, really. Mainly curiosity.
He must have heard of me from busybodies.
He offered me commissions—

CARLOS

Which you refused—

POSA

Of course.

CARLOS

How did you leave him?

POSA

On quite good terms, I'd say.

CARLOS

Was there no mention made of me?

POSA

Of you? Only in general. (*Handing him the note from the Queen*) If I am
not mistaken, this is what you've waited for.
Just two words from her for now, but by
tomorrow I expect to know just when
and where she'll see you.

CARLOS (glancing at the note)

I'll see you later at the monastery—

[IV-2]

POSA

What is the rush? Nobody's nearby.

CARLOS

Have we changed our roles? You seem so sure today—
it puzzles me.

POSA

No more than yesterday, Carlos.

CARLOS

What does the Queen say in her note?

POSA

Haven't you read?

CARLOS

Why yes, I guess I did.

POSA

What is it, Carl? What is with you?

CARLOS (now reading the note more carefully)

She says I should be ready for important
news. What could she mean?

POSA

Carl, even if I knew, are you inclined
to listen now? Your mood seems strange—

CARLOS

Have I offended you? I didn't mean to.
I guess, my mind is somewhere else.

POSA

Why? What is the matter?

CARLOS

Nothing, really. I thank you for
the note. I'll put it with the others— *(takes out a small briefcase)*

POSA

I don't think that is wise. In fact, it would
be best if you would let me have your briefcase—

CARLOS

My briefcase— why?

POSA

For your protection, Carlos, just in case.
The letters, harmless as they are, could be

[Don Carlos]

misunderstood. It really would be better
if you would let me have them. No one would
look for them on me, and I will keep them
safe for you.

CARLOS

I can't imagine why this should be necessary—

POSA

Don't be alarmed, Carl. It's merely a
precaution that could protect you and the Queen
from harm. It's for the best, believe me—

CARLOS

It certainly is strange—

POSA

Trust me, my friend.
(Carlos hands him his briefcase reluctantly.)

CARLOS

Protect it well—

POSA

You know I will.

CARLOS

I gave you a great deal with these—

POSA

Not near as much as I already have
of you. More later at the monastery.
I must run—

CARLOS

Wait— please. I must see them again. Among
these letters, there is one she wrote to me
at Alcala when I laid ill there. I
always carried it with me. I find it
difficult to part with it. I want to keep
that one, only that one, you'll keep the rest.
*(Posa returns the case to him; Carlos removes the letter,
then gives the case back to Posa.)*

POSA

Carlos, I hate to do it. This is the one
I wanted most.

CARLOS

Farewell.

[IV-2]

*(He walks away slowly, then stops, turns around and gives
the letter back to Posa.)*

Here you have it back.

(After a pause, trying to control his emotions) Is this my father's
doing? It isn't, Rod, is it? Tell me, it is not.

(He hurries away.)

POSA (after Carlos has disappeared)

Pain? I cannot spare you that, my friend. But
why point out the storm clouds to the sleeping?
Suffice it that I try to change their course
and that, when you wake up, the sky is clear.

(Exit Marquis Posa.)

[Don Carlos]

SCENE THREE: *The King's Study.*

It is night. The King is sitting in an armchair reading papers, as Count Lerma enters.

LERMA

Your Majesty, the Queen is here and seeks
an audience—

KING

Now? At this uncustomary hour?
I cannot see her now.

*(The Queen enters; Count Lerma bows and leaves. The Queen
curtsies before the King, but does not rise. The King
stands up.)*

QUEEN

My husband, I regret the need of coming here
at this late hour, but I'm compelled to seek
out justice from the throne.

KING

Justice?

QUEEN

I have encountered most unworthy treatment
at this court. My jewel box was pilfered
and objects of great worth to me were stolen—

KING

Of great worth to you?

QUEEN

This theft was made worse still by the impertinence
an unfamiliar thief would lack—

KING

Impertinence? But do get up—

QUEEN

No, Sire, not till you've given me your solemn
word to find the malefactor and to
punish him, or else to let me leave this
court that would protect my thief.

KING

Please do get up from this position—

[IV-3]

QUEEN (gets up)

I am convinced he is a man of rank,
for in the box were diamonds and pearls
worth far more than a million; these were not
touched. The thief was satisfied with letters—

KING

Which I should know about?

QUEEN

Gladly, my Lord. The letters and a gold
medallion were from the Prince, your son—

KING

To you, Madame? From Carlos? And you— you
tell me this?

QUEEN

And why not, Sire? I think you may recall
that Carlos wrote to me to Saint Germain
with the approval of both crowns. If the
medallion that he had enclosed was covered
by this license, I don't know— or if some
premature hope induced him, that I will
not judge. But even if it did, it was
excusable. For at that time, could he
have thought that I would be his mother?

*(The King closes his eyes and rubs his forehead, then
opens a drawer of his desk and takes out a medallion.)*

KING

Is this the one?

QUEEN (takes the medallion and looks at it)

Really, Sire! If this was done at your command
to test my loyalty, then—

KING

Then what?

QUEEN

Then I have no one to accuse nor to feel
sorry for but you— for not having a wife on
whom such tactics would be worth the effort!

KING

Such language is familiar. However,
for a second time, Madame, you won't deceive
me, as you did so neatly in Aranjuez.

[Don Carlos]

The Queen, so pure and innocent, and quite
beyond reproach— I know her better now.
Tell me the truth: did you see no one in
Aranjuez that day?

QUEEN

I saw the Prince.

KING

At last it's in the open! What outrage!
And no concern at all for the King's honor!
Why did you lie to me?

QUEEN

Because I'm not accustomed, Sire, to be
examined in the presence of the court
like a delinquent. The truth will never
be denied by me, if it is asked with
dignity and fairness which hardly was
the case at the event to which Your
Majesty refers. I granted audience
to the Prince, because I wanted to. I
do not look to custom as the judge in
matters known to me as innocent. And
I concealed it from Your Majesty as I
was not inclined to argue for this freedom
before my entourage.

KING

You speak most bold, Madame—

QUEEN

And I might also add that the Crown Prince
deserves a better hearing from his father
than he enjoys at present.

KING

The Prince deserves?

QUEEN

Why shall I hide it, Sire? I am fond of
Carlos, and I love him as my dearest
relative who, at one time, was found worthy
to become my husband. I have not learned
as yet why he should be more distant now
than any other, simply because he used
to be closer to me than any other.
If policies of State require you to
make alliances to suit your purpose,

[IV-3]

then you shall find it somewhat harder to
dissolve them. I do not want to hate because
I'm told to, nor do I want my feelings
so restricted—

KING

Elizabeth, you've seen me in my weakest
moments, and that makes you so bold. But fear
this weakness! For what has led to it, can
also lead to frenzy!

QUEEN

But why? What have I done?

KING (taking her hand)

Should it become clear— and isn't it already?—
But, if the clear measure of your guilt should be
increased by just one single breath— if I
have been deceived— (*he releases her hand*) I could survive that, too.
I can and will. But heaven help us then,
Elizabeth, both you and me!

QUEEN

What have I done?

KING

Blood will be shed, so mark my words!

QUEEN

Oh God in heaven— has it come to this?

KING

You ask, Madame, what you have done? You still ask?
You have destroyed our marriage! I hardly
recognize myself— no longer do I value
customs, the voice of nature, long-established
treaties— these have become quite meaningless
to me—

QUEEN

Oh, how I pity you, Your Majesty—

KING (in rage)

Pity? You pity me? That is the ultimate!
Pity for me from— an adulteress!

QUEEN

You don't know what you're saying, Sire, for if
you did, I would depart for France this very
minute.

[Don Carlos]

(She goes toward the door.)

KING (as she opens the door)

Elizabeth!

QUEEN

You will regret this night. And when you do,
send word to me.

(Exit the Queen. A few moments later, Count Lerma enters.)

KING (after he has regained his composure)

The Queen is indisposed. See to it that
she is safely escorted to her quarters.

LERMA

At once, Your Majesty. Also, this
moment, the Marquis Posa came to call—

KING

Then let him in!

(Lerma goes out quickly; Marquis Posa enters. The King goes toward him. Posa bows slightly.)

Welcome, Marquis. What do you bring me?

POSA

Just now, as I passed through the antechamber,
I saw Her Majesty, the Queen. She was
as pale as death. Also, rumors preceded
her of an exchange of words. Your Majesty,
I've made discoveries that could perhaps
throw quite another light on matters—

KING

Well?

POSA

I found occasion, Sire, to obtain
the Prince's briefcase containing certain
papers which will, I hope, help to explain—

(He hands Carlos' briefcase to the King.)

KING (going through the papers with eagerness)

A letter from the Emperor, my father—
I don't seem to recall. And what is this?
Some thoughts from Tacitus? And plans in detail
for a fortress? And this here? I know the hand—
a lady's— *(reading half loud, half to himself)* 'This key will
open the last room in the pavilion
of the Queen'— and what is that? 'Here love will be

[IV-3]

permitted— your reward’— This is the devil’s doing! I recognize her hand. Yes, this is perfidy!

POSA

The Queen’s writing? It can’t be—

KING

The Princess Eboli’s!

POSA

Then it is true what yesterday the page Henarez told me who gave the note together with the key to Carlos—

KING (grasping Posa’s arm)

Marquis! I find myself in dreadful hands. This woman— I must tell you that this woman forced the Queen’s jewel box and informed me that Carlos and she— Who knows how much the priest may be involved. I have been tricked by monstrous treachery.

POSA

Then it was luck that I—

KING

Marquis, my friend! I am afraid I’ve done her wrong. I’ve done my wife a grave injustice!

POSA

If there has been a secret understanding between the Queen and Carlos, then I’m sure its nature was quite different from what these ugly rumors have accused them of. I’ve also reason to believe that his desire for command in Flanders was the idea of the Queen.

KING

I can believe that. But may God help Carlos if he should listen more to her than he does to me.

POSA

The Queen’s ambitious, and may I be allowed to say that she is sensitive for having been excluded from affairs of state. Carlos’ rash temper seemed convenient to her aspirations.

[Don Carlos]

KING

I do not fear her skills of statesmanship.

POSA

But— whether the Prince loves her, or whether even worse could be expected, that is a question worth investigating. Here, I believe, closer surveillance is advised.

KING

I shall expect of you to vouch for him, or else I can't allow him to be free much longer.

POSA

If you expect that, Sire, then I must ask for full authority, with no conditions and no interference.

KING

That you shall have, I promise you. Indeed, my good Marquis, I am indebted to my fortune for finding me a man like you. I won't conceal my pleasure. The world shall know my gratitude. Envied I want the man whom I have chosen as my friend.

POSA (after a brief pause)

One more precaution, Sire. I fear that Carlos may receive some warning of Your Majesty's suspicion. He has good friends here and abroad, including in the Netherlands. His fear of being trapped may lead to desperate actions on his part. I would suggest, therefore, to be prepared with countermeasures—

KING

What have you got in mind?

POSA

A secret order of detention, Sire, to be placed in my hands and to be used immediately in the event impending danger would demand it—

KING

These are strong measures, too strong perhaps—

POSA

Much is at stake, Your Majesty. Also,

[IV-3]

such order could be kept as a state secret
unless its use were actually required—

KING

The Kingdom is in peril. The serious
danger justifies uncommon means,

(He writes the order of detention and hands it to Posa.)

Here, dear Marquis. I need not caution you
to exercise discretion and sound judgment—

POSA

I'll only use this as a last resort.

KING (taking his arm)

Go then, my friend. Do what you must to restore
peace to my mind— and rest to sleepless nights.

(Exit Posa.)

[Don Carlos]

SCENE FOUR: The Antechamber of the Queen

Princess Eboli is alone in the room as Carlos rushes in.

CARLOS

Please don't be frightened, Princess I'll be as harmless as a child—

EBOLI

Oh God in Heaven— it is you—

CARLOS

You can't be still offended, can you? Tell me you are no longer mad at me—

EBOLI

Prince, you must leave, The Queen—

CARLOS (grabbing her hand)

Can't you forgive me? A girl as beautiful as you simply can't hate forever—

EBOLI (freeing herself)

This is no place to talk. We can't be seen together here—

CARLOS

Not long ago you cared for me— I know you did. Forget what happened since—

EBOLI

No more of that—

CARLOS

Let me remind you of those golden moments of— only yesterday—

EBOLI

Oh Prince, you're playing cruel games with me!

CARLOS

You can be generous. Forget whatever hurt I've caused you. You know I didn't mean it. Take me for what I am. I've come here counting on your noble nature. I am alone. I have no other friend left on this earth— I must talk with the Queen. Please let me see her—

EBOLI

You know I can't do that—

[IV-4]

(At this moment, Posa appears in the door with two officers of the King's guard.)

CARLOS (taking her hand again)

But you can! Nothing in the world could hold
you back from doing what you want— if you
would only want it—

(Posa stands between them.)

POSA (in great excitement)

What did he say? Ignore it, don't believe a word—

CARLOS

In God's name— what're you doing here?

POSA

He's mad! Pay no attention—

CARLOS

Lead me to her. Don't let him stop you—

POSA (pulls Princess Eboli away from Carlos)

Count of Cordua! By order of the King— *(holding up the King's order of detention)* Prince Carlos is your prisoner!

(Carlos is stunned. Princess Eboli cries out and wants to run away, but Posa restrains her. Even the two Officers of the Guard are aghast.)

Your sword, my Prince! *(Carlos surrenders it as if in a state of shock)*
Princess, you'll stay here! *(To one of the officers)* You'll see to it
that he— His Royal Highness— will see no one,
speak with no one, and that includes yourself—
on peril of your head! *(He whispers some additional instructions to the officer)*

I'm going to the King at once to justify
this action, as I will to you, my Prince.
Expect me in an hour.

(Carlos lets himself be led away without resistance or sign of emotion; only as he passes Posa does he look at him in a forlorn manner. Posa turns his head away from him. Princess Eboli tries to escape again, but Posa catches her by the arm.)

EBOLI

Let me go, for heaven's sake—

POSA

What did he say to you?

[Don Carlos]

EBOLI

Nothing. Let me go—

POSA

Tell me what he said. There's no escape. You'll never get the chance to tell another soul—

EBOLI

What do you mean? D'you want to murder me?

POSA

I could. Don't tempt me, woman.

EBOLI

But why? What have I done? Tell me what I've done.

POSA

There is still time. The poison hasn't left your lips. I can still smash the vial and nothing will have changed. The destiny of Spain, a woman's life— they'll all remain the same—

EBOLI

Why do you hesitate? I do not ask for mercy—

POSA

No— this is not the way. This is as barbarous as it is cowardly. Thank God, there is another—

(He lets her go and rushes out. A moment later, the Queen enters through the door leading from her private rooms.)

QUEEN

What was this uproar? Who was here?

EBOLI

He's been arrested.

QUEEN

Who?

EBOLI

The Marquis Posa took him prisoner on orders from the King.

QUEEN

But who?

EBOLI

The Prince—

[IV-4]

QUEEN

Have you gone mad?

EBOLI

He was just led away—

QUEEN

Who took him prisoner?

EBOLI

The Marquis Posa—

QUEEN

Thank heaven it was he—

EBOLI

You say that with such calm, Your Majesty—
Perhaps you know why he has been arrested.

QUEEN

Oh, probably some misbehavior; not so
unusual for a young man of his
hot-blooded temperament—

EBOLI

No, no, that wasn't it. I know the reason.
It was a fiendish, monstrous deed! There is
no help for him. He's doomed. And I—
I am his murderess—

QUEEN

You don't know what you're saying—

EBOLI

Yes, yes, I do. I know the reason. I
might have known that it will come to this—

QUEEN (taking her hand)

Princess, compose yourself. Don't be upset,
and when you're calm again, tell me what happened.

EBOLI

Oh Majesty, not so much kindness, not
this gentle grace. My conscience is consumed
by flames from hell. It would be better
if you'd crush me. I am a wretched, miserable
creature and undeserving of this gentle
treatment—

QUEEN

It might be easier for both of us

[Don Carlos]

if you would tell me what this is about—

EBOLI

The letters you were missing— I stole them
from your jewel chest—

QUEEN

You?

EBOLI

And gave them to the King to make him think the worst—

QUEEN

But why? Why did you do it?

EBOLI

Vengeance— and love— and maybe madness. You see,
I was in love with Carlos, and I hated you—

QUEEN

You loved the Prince and at the same time sought
to harm him?

EBOLI

My love was not returned.

QUEEN (after a short pause)

Now things begin to make some sense. You were
in love with him? Alright. I have forgiven
you already. Now we must both try to
forget it.

EBOLI

No, no, my Queen. You are too generous.
One more admission still remains. It is
by far the worst. — The King and I— oh please,
don't look at me. You see, the crime that I
accused you of— I did commit myself.

*(Eboli sinks to her knees before the Queen. There is
an icy silence, then the Queen turns around and goes
into her private rooms. Eboli buries her face and
remains in that position until the Duchess of Olivarez
enters.)*

OLIVAREZ

Princess Eboli!

EBOLI (rising slowly)

I know why you are here. The Queen has sent you
to announce my sentence—

[IV-4]

OLIVAREZ

Her Majesty has ordered me to take
your cross and keys—

*EBOLI (takes off a necklace with a golden cross representing
an order of merit and hands it to the Duchess; then
she surrenders a set of keys.)*

Will I see her again? Will I be allowed
to see her just once more?

OLIVAREZ

Your fate will be announced to you at Mary's
convent.

EBOLI

I will not see the Queen again.

OLIVAREZ (embraces her coldly with her face turned away)

Try to live happily.

*(The Duchess remains, with her back turned to Eboli,
until the latter has slowly walked out of the room.
Then she looks at the cross and keys and is about to
reenter the Queen's suite, as Marquis Posa rushes in.)*

POSA

Would you admit me to the Queen? It's urgent.

*(The Duchess nods to him coldly, enters the Queen's suite,
from which, a moment later, the Queen emerges.)*

QUEEN

I'm glad you've come, Marquis.

POSA

Are we alone, Your Majesty? Can no one
hear us?

QUEEN

Nobody.

POSA

Most probably you know already that
Carlos has been taken prisoner—

QUEEN

By you, so I've been told.

POSA

Yes, that is true. By me.

[Don Carlos]

QUEEN

I do respect your actions, even when
I cannot understand them. But this time
it would seem, you're playing dangerously—

POSA

And I've lost.

QUEEN

Explain yourself.

POSA

Don't be alarmed, my Queen. Carlos is safe.
But I have played my trumps— I've played them all
in one most dubious hand. And now I ask myself
what right has any man to count on chance alone
to steer his destiny— But time is precious,
it is running out for me.

QUEEN

Running out? What somber tone, Marquis—

POSA

Carlos is safe! The price— it doesn't matter.
But only for today, there are few hours left—
and, he must use them well. This very night,
he must still leave Madrid.

QUEEN

Tonight?

POSA

All plans are set. A coach will wait for him
at the Carthusian monastery that long
has been our meeting place. There is so much
I want to tell him, still so much, but there's
so little time. But you, my Queen, will see
him, late tonight, that's why I'm asking you—

QUEEN

Can you be more explicit, dear Marquis?
I do not follow you. What has happened?

POSA

I have been fortunate, most fortunate,
because I've been a prince's friend.
My heart embraced mankind, but it belonged
to him. In Carlos' soul, I wanted to
create a paradise for millions. Oh yes,
my dreams were beautiful. Yet it pleased

[IV-4]

providence to call me back before the
time of planting. Soon, Carlos will no longer
have me, and so his friend lives on in his
beloved—

QUEEN

This is the language of a man about
to die. I hope it's only your excitement—

POSA

Tell Carlos to recall the oath we both
had taken, years ago, upon the holy
sacrament. I have kept mine— and now it's
up to him. He has a chance still, one more
chance, to give life to that bold outline of
a better state, the dream of our friendship.
He must now lay the cornerstone. If he
completes it or if not— is not important.
What matters is— he must begin! And many
centuries from now, men may find strength
in his example, and they themselves may
carry on this dream. Tell him, I charge
his soul to work for a more noble fate
for all mankind— that I demand it as I
have the right! It would have suited me to
help him bring about a great new dawn for Spain.
The King has treated me with generosity.
He had called me his son. I kept his seals
of office— and his Albas are no more.
But that is over— my choice had to be quick:
Carlos or I—

QUEEN

At last, I think I realize what you've done—

POSA

Just given up two hours of a misty
evening to save a radiant summer day.
In my friend Carlos the fate of Europe
seeks fulfillment. Tell him all that, my Queen.
(*Brief pause*) His love for you, I saw it grow. I could
have stopped it in its early stage, but I did
not. It seemed so great— so promising—
I fostered it, and I have no regrets.
Perhaps the world will judge it differently,
but in that hapless flame I recognized
the hope from which greatness may come.

[Don Carlos]

QUEEN

Marquis, your friendship filled you so completely
that you've forgotten I'm a woman. I have
emotions, too, but you have not considered
those when you awarded me this role in
Carlos' life. You've never been concerned with
our feelings, with the risks of such
relationship and all the heartaches that
it could entail— or had you given that
some thought?

POSA

I had. But it occurred to me that, in
your case, to create greatness in a man,
might transcend your passion. I don't think I
was wrong. Greatness and beauty seek each other.
No worldly prejudice can change this knowledge.
Can you, then, promise me, my Queen, to go on
giving him this kind of love, despite all
fears, all dangers, all temptations? Can you
promise that?

QUEEN

My heart, and it alone, shall guide my actions
now and always—

POSA

Then I am satisfied. My work is done.
(*He bows and prepares to leave.*)

QUEEN

You leave, Marquis, without informing me
when we will meet again?

POSA

We'll meet again, my Queen.

QUEEN

I used to understand you. But why have
you done this to me?

POSA

There was no other way.

QUEEN

No, Marquis, no! You plunged into this deed
which, in your mind, is noble. Don't deny it.
For a long time you've craved for admiration.
What do you care if, in the process, a

[IV-4]

thousand hearts are broken, as long as you
have satisfied your pride?

POSA

I thought you knew me better.

QUEEN (after a moment's pause)

Is there no other possibility?

POSA

None.

QUEEN

Think carefully, Marquis. Can't I be of some
help? You know me only half. I have courage.

POSA

I know that well.

QUEEN

And still no rescue?

POSA

None.

QUEEN (turning her face from him to hide her tears)

Then go! I have no more regard for any man.

POSA (rushes to her in deep emotion and kisses her hand)

My Queen!— Oh God, life is so beautiful!

(He rushes out.)

ACT FIVE

SCENE ONE: The Audience Chamber

The Duke of Alba and Domingo in quiet conversation as Count Lerma enters from the King's study.

LERMA

Still no sign of Marquis Posa?

ALBA

No. Not yet.

(Don Raimond of Taxis enters hurriedly.)

TAXIS

Count Lerma, please announce me to the King.

LERMA

The King is not available to anyone.

TAXIS

I must see him. Tell His Majesty it is a matter of importance— it cannot be delayed.

(Lerma nods dubiously and goes into the King's study.)

ALBA

Patience, dear Taxis. You might as well get used to waiting. You will not see the King.

TAXIS

I won't? Why not?

ALBA

Unless, of course, you have obtained permission first from Marquis Posa— who treats both son and father like his prisoners.

TAXIS

Marquis Posa? Are you sure? That is the same whose letter I have here—

ALBA

What kind of letter?

TAXIS

Addressed to Brussels. That is the reason why I must see the King.

[V-1]

ALBA (to Domingo)

To Brussels! Did you hear that, Priest?

DOMINGO

I have indeed. To whom is it addressed?

TAXIS (hesitates then looks at Alba who nods)

To the Prince of Orange and Nassau—

ALBA

To William? Priest, that's treason—

DOMINGO

Caution, good Duke. But I agree, this letter must at once be handed to the King. Your watchfulness, Don Raimond, may render a great service to the Crown.

LERMA (comes out of the King's study; to Taxis)

His Majesty will see you.

(Taxis goes into the King's study.)

Where on earth could Marquis Posa be?

DOMINGO

He will be found.

ALBA

The whole thing is incredible! The Prince a prisoner— and the Monarch himself doesn't know why! How did he take the news?

LERMA

He hasn't said a single word about it.

(There is some noise in the King's study.)

What was that?

TAXIS (opening the door)

Count Lerma

(Lerma rushes into the King's study closing the door behind him.)

ALBA

What's going on?

DOMINGO

Nothing good, I fear.

ALBA

He calls in Lerma when he knows that you and I are waiting. Am I not the same

[Don Carlos]

Alba to whom all doors were always open?
(Domingo is listening at the door to the study.)

DOMINGO
Nobody speaks a word. I even hear their breathing—

ALBA
Someone's coming. Quick!
(Domingo leaves the door. The Prince of Parma and the Dukes of Feria and Medina Sidonia enter.)

PARMA
We've come to see the King.

ALBA
You can't—

PARMA
No? Who is with him?

FERIA
Doubtless, the Marquis Posa—

ALBA
No, not this time, though he's expected any moment.

PARMA
We've just arrived from Saragossa. All of Madrid seems terrified. It's true then— Prince Carlos has been taken prisoner?

ALBA
By Marquis Posa!

PARMA
But why? What is the charge against him?

ALBA
That's known only to Posa and the King—

PARMA
The Prince arrested without consulting the Cortes?

FERIA
This violates all rules of proper conduct and is a provocation of the State. Whoever is to blame here, should be punished.

[V-1]

ALBA

That is the way I feel!

MEDINA SIDONIA

So do I.

ALBA

Who'll follow me in there? I'm willing now
to take my chances with the King.

(Lerma rushes out of the King's study.)

LERMA

Duke of Alba—

DOMINGO

At last! Heaven be praised.

(Alba rushes into the King's study.)

LERMA *(in great excitement)*

When Posa does arrive— the King is busy now.
He'll send for him—

DOMINGO

What happened, Count? You're paler than a corpse—

LERMA *(wanting to leave)*

That is the devil's doing—

PARMA and FERIA

What is? What is going on?

MEDINA SIDONIA

How is the King?

LERMA

The King has wept—

ALL *(together)*

Wept?

*(There is great consternation. The ringing of a bell inside
the study can be heard. Count Lerma rushes in.)*

DOMINGO *(trying to hold him back)*

Count? Just one more word—

MEDINA SIDONIA *(shaking his head in disbelief)*

The King has wept!

PARMA

What possibly could have upset him so?

[Don Carlos]

FERIA

Something is wrong here— very wrong!

DOMINGO

In all the years I've known him— the King has never wept.

MEDINA SIDONIA

I hope he is not ill—

DOMINGO

We must pray that peace will be restored to him. (*Brief silence.*)

PARMA

Most likely the arrest of Carlos has some connection with all this.

DOMINGO

The King himself did not appear to know exactly why the Prince had been arrested.

FERIA

Then only Posa knows?

(At this moment, the Duke of Alba rushes out in a triumphant mood and embraces Domingo.)

ALBA

Let all the church bells ring, victory is ours!

DOMINGO

Ours?

(All crowd around Alba in excitement.)

ALL (simultaneously)

Explain! What does it mean? Tell us.

ALBA

Gentlemen! Come with me to the King. You shall hear more from me inside.

(He leads the Grandees and Domingo into the study.)

[V-2]

SCENE TWO: *A Room in the Palace.*

Through a gate-like door of iron bars a dark corridor can be seen where guards are marching back and forth.

Carlos sits at a table, his head on his arms, as if asleep, when Marquis Posa enters through the iron door which is opened for him and closed behind him by a guard. For a moment he stands at the door looking at Carlos, then goes closer to him.

POSA

Carlos, it's me.

CARLOS (*barely lifting up his head*)

Isn't it good of you to come!

POSA

I figured you could use a friend here— maybe.

CARLOS

How considerate, such thoughtfulness befits great souls.

POSA

Carlos—

CARLOS

It must have cost you much what you have done.
No doubt, your gentle heart was bleeding as
you prepared your victim for the altar—

POSA

Carlos— you do not understand—

CARLOS

Now you can finish what was mine to do—
for which I never had the chance. You will
give Spain the golden days she had longed for
in vain to get from me. I'm useless to
your aspirations now. There's nothing left
for me. Perhaps some hope is left for Spain.
You have such influence now on the King,
and if you use it wisely—

POSA

Will you let me explain—

CARLOS

The only thing that makes me sad is that

[Don Carlos]

you didn't spare the Queen. I would have wished
a better lot for her. I would have been so
grateful, had you spared her. But then, what's she
to you?

POSA (handing Carlos his briefcase)

Here are most of your letters back. I think
they will be safer now with you—

CARLOS

What does this mean? Didn't the King read them?
Didn't you show them all to him?

POSA

Who said I showed him any?

CARLOS

Count Lerma did. He couldn't lie to me.

POSA

No, that old man has never learned to lie.
The King still has the other letters,
but they can't cause you any harm.

CARLOS

Then why, in God's name, am I here?

POSA

For your protection. Just in case you try
a second time to share your confidence
with Princess Eboli. — Someone's coming.

*(The iron door is being opened to admit the Duke of Alba.
He approaches Carlos respectfully, carrying his sword.
Throughout the scene, his back is turned to Posa.)*

ALBA

Prince, you are free. The King has sent me to
announce your freedom. At the same time, may I
be the first to have the privilege—

CARLOS

First I'm arrested, now I am released
without the slightest knowledge why—

ALBA

A mistake, my Prince. Apparently, a fraud
was perpetrated on His Majesty—

CARLOS

But is it not on the King's command that

[V-2]

I am here?

ALBA

An error of His Majesty, my Prince.

CARLOS

That is indeed regrettable! But if the King commits an error, it behooves the King to make amends in person. I am Don Philip's son. And what His Majesty had thought to be his duty, I will not now accept as kindness. Whatever I had been accused of, I am prepared to let the Cortes judge me. But from your hand I won't accept my sword.

ALBA

His Majesty, I'm sure, will not object to granting you this wish. Will you permit me to accompany Your Highness to the King?

CARLOS

I shall stay here until either the King or the good people of Madrid will lead me from this prison. Take this reply to him!

(Alba bows curtly and leaves. He can still be seen through the barred door issuing orders to the guards.)

POSA

It worked, Carl. It has served its purpose.

CARLOS

What has? What do you mean?

POSA

You're safe, Carlos, you're free. And I—

CARLOS

Yes, what about you?

POSA

I can— now for the first time— call you brother. Yes, finally I have the right to call you that. Oh Carl, this moment is important. I am contented with myself.

CARLOS

You seem so strange. You've never been like this before.

POSA

We have to say good-bye. Don't be afraid, Carl.

[Don Carlos]

Be a man. You are about to lose me, Carl,
for many years— fools call it forever.

(Carlos looks at him in utter amazement.)

Be brave, my friend. I've counted much on you
to spend with me this somber hour that many
call so cruelly the last. Let us sit down—
I'm rather tired. *(They both sit down.)* I will be brief. You
know, of course, the King had called me. What happened
then is known to all Madrid. For a short
time, I was the closest to his throne. But
what you do not know is that your secret
was betrayed— that letters in the Queen's
possession revealed your love. Yes, Carl,
I myself brought on the circumstances
that led you to this prison. There was too
much against you for the King to overlook.
The only course left open was to make sure
his wrath would fall on me. So it appeared
that I became your enemy, but only
for one purpose: to serve you— to protect
you— to give you one more chance to be the
King Spain needs. Are you still listening?

CARLOS

Of course. Go on.

POSA

Until that time, my conscience had been clear.
But then, the unaccustomed glitter of
the King's favor blinded my pride and
gave me confidence beyond all reason
in my own actions. And in this fever
of excitement, I failed to share with you
the facts of my mysterious game. This sureness
on my part was madness, I know that now.
But it was based on my belief that nothing—
absolutely nothing I could do might ever
be construed to interfere with our
friendship.

(Carlos gets up and begins to walk around.)

What I had feared most came to pass. You were
upset by all kinds of imagined terrors:
my new position, fears for the Queen,
my own reluctance to communicate, your
understandable mistrust— and in your
loneliness, you threw yourself into the
devil's arms— Eboli's— the same who had

[V-2]

betrayed you to the King. I saw you rush
to her— I followed you. Too late, you had
already said too much—

CARLOS

No, you are wrong. I told her nothing. I
begged to see the Queen so I could warn her
against you—

POSA

Despair befogged my senses in that moment.
There was nothing— nothing I could do.
Then an idea struck me. If I misled
the King! If I could make it look I was
the culprit. Likely or not, it might
suffice, because the worst is easy to
believe for him. At least, he'd stop and think,
and that would give you time—

CARLOS

You did that?

POSA

I lost no time in writing to the Prince
of Orange. I told him how I loved the Queen
and how, through the suspicion falsely cast
on you, I had till now escaped the King's
fury, and how, in fact, through his own favor,
I'd found admission to the Queen. I added
I was fearful of discovery, as you had
learned of it and had confided to the
Princess Eboli who was to warn the Queen.
As a result, I had arrested you,
but now all appeared lost, and I
intend to flee to Brussels. This letter—

CARLOS

You didn't send it through the mails? Surely, you
know that every letter to the Netherlands—

POSA

Is intercepted? Of course, I do. And
as things stand, your friend Taxis has done
his duty well—

CARLOS

Then you are lost.

(He rushes to the door, Posa following him.)

[Don Carlos]

POSA

Stay here. Have you gone mad?

CARLOS

Don't— let me go— He may be hiring your assassins at this moment—

POSA

Stop! So much more precious is the time we have—

CARLOS

I have to get to him before it is too late—

POSA

Listen to me— Was I so hasty when,
as a boy, you took my punishment?

CARLOS (turns around, moved)

No—

POSA

Carl, save yourself for Flanders. The Kingdom
is your calling. To die for you is mine—

CARLOS

Don't say such things. We'll go to him together,
arm in arm, and I will say to him 'A friend has
done this for his friend.' He will be moved—
my father is not without feeling— he will
be moved to tears, and he'll forgive us—

(A shot is fired through the iron door.)

Good God— for whom was that?

POSA

I think— for me.

(He falls to the floor; Carlos bends over him.)

CARLOS

Oh God in Heaven!

POSA

He lost no time— the King— I wish we had
more time. You must escape tonight. The Queen—
knows everything— I can't—

(He falls back and dies. Carlos remains at his side.

*After a while, the iron door is opened and the King enters,
accompanied by the Prince of Parma, the Dukes of Alba,
Feria, and Medina Sidonia, Domingo, Count Lerma
and other Grandees. When the King sees Carlos at
the side of the dead Posa, he is visibly shaken.)*

[V-2]

KING (after a considerable silence)

Your wish was granted, son. Here I am, with
all the Grandees of my realm, to give you
back your freedom.

*(Carlos looks up at him, as if he had awakened from a long
dream. Then he looks at Posa's body again.)*

Here is your sword. We acted with much haste.

*(The King gives Carlos his hand to help him up. He
then hands him his sword.)*

Your place is in my arms.

*(He embraces Carlos, but a moment later, Carlos pushes
him back.)*

CARLOS

You smell of murder! *(The Grandees are stunned.)* Don't look so shocked.
What dreadful act have I committed? Touched
the Almighty? You needn't worry. I
won't lay hands on him. You see that mark
there on his forehead? God has branded him.

KING (wants to leave— to his Grandees)

Come.

*(Carlos grabs his arm and holds him back. The Grandees
touch their swords and several are drawing them.)*

CARLOS

Put your swords back. You think I've lost my mind?
My business is with the King alone
and does not concern you.

KING (to the Grandees)

Cover your swords. Stand back. Are we not son
and father? I want to see to what extent
the bonds of nature can be violated—

CARLOS

The bonds of nature? And what has nature
ever meant to you? Death is your policy.
In your empire, humanity is dead
and you have killed it. *(Pointing at Posa's body)* Look at him.
There's never been a man like that before.
You took a life that was worth more than your
whole empire!

KING

If I have been too rash, does it befit you—
for whose behalf I've done this— to ask to
justify myself?

[Don Carlos]

CARLOS

Can it be possible? You haven't guessed
who this man was? He was my friend! And do you
want to know for what he died? He died for me!

KING (*turning pale*)

My intuition was correct!

CARLOS

Yes, Sire. We were brothers, bound by a nobler bond
than nature's. To save me from your hands,
he wrote to Orange in the Netherlands.
It was his first and only lie, yet you
believed it. You dared to seek his friendship,
but couldn't stand up to this trifling test.
You sought his service, and in return all
you could do was murder him!

(There is a prolonged silence, as the Duke of Alba comes forward.)

ALBA

Not this deadly silence, Sire. Look around
you. Speak to us.

CARLOS

Still, you were not indifferent to him.
He had regard for you. He could have been
important to your throne. A small speck of
his mind would have sufficed to make a great,
immortal king of you. You have cheated yourself!

(He removes his sword and hands it to the King.)

Here is my sword. Here I renounce all that the world
could offer me. You find yourself another
son from among strangers. Here lies my Kingdom—

(He sinks to the floor besides the body and does not participate in what follows. In the distance, a confusion of voices can be heard. The King looks at the Grandees, but all avoid his eyes.)

KING

Well? Will no one look at me? Have you all
judged me? Have my subjects reached a verdict?

(The tumult grows louder and is coming closer. Alba goes to the iron door, as an Officer of the Guard hurries in.)

OFFICER OF THE GUARD

Where is the King? *(He sees him and goes to him, saluting briefly.)*
Madrid is up in arms, Your Majesty.

[V-2]

A raging mob of thousands is beleaguering
the palace. They've heard Prince Carlos was
arrested and they are fearing for his life.
They want to see him or they'll set fire
to the town—

ALBA

The danger's real, Sire. We do not know yet
who has armed the mob, but for your own protection
I would advise Your Majesty to flee the palace—

KING

Flee the palace? Is not my throne still standing?
Am I not still the King? Or has this boy softened
you so— you're only waiting for the moment
to desert me? Am I betrayed by rebels?

ALBA (*fiery*)

No, Sire. It hasn't come to this. It never will,
for we are Spaniards and we'll protect the King,
no matter what!

*(He draws his sword and raises it high, whereupon
the other Grantees do likewise.)*

And now away from here, Your Majesty,
while I will lead my troops and restore peace.

*(He steps aside to let the King pass, then goes out behind
him, followed by all Grantees. Carlos remains alone for a
short while when the Queen's Physician enters timidly, then
approaches Carlos with shyness.)*

PHYSICIAN

I have a message from Her Majesty,
the Queen. *(Carlos pays no attention.)* My name's Mercado. I am her
Majesty's physician. This royal seal is
my credential. *(He shows Carlos his ring.)* The Queen wishes to see
Your Highness on a matter of importance—

CARLOS

Nothing is important any more—

PHYSICIAN

I understand that it concerns a message
from the Marquis Posa—

CARLOS (*jumping up*)

What? Then take me to her, quickly—

PHYSICIAN

Not now, my Prince. Wait for the night to fall.

[Don Carlos]

The guard's been doubled. It's impossible
to enter now unseen—

CARLOS

I'll take my chances—

PHYSICIAN

No, Your Highness. The Queen has thought of a
more cautious way, strange though it is—

CARLOS

Well?

PHYSICIAN

As you may know, the legend goes around
that the departed spirit of the Emperor Charles
makes its appearance in the palace
corridors at midnight, dressed in the robes of
a Carthusian monk. Most people do believe
this, and the guards there man their posts with fear.
If you are willing to disguise yourself as
such a monk, you can reach unchallenged the
apartment of the Queen. This key will let
you in. The robe and mask will be delivered
to your rooms. — What shall I tell Her Majesty?

CARLOS

I shall be there.

*(The Physician bows and leaves. Immediately thereafter,
Count Lerma enters hurriedly and out of breath.)*

LERMA

You must escape at once! The King is furious.
Your freedom is in peril, if not your life.
Don't ask me how I know. I slipped away
to warn you, Prince. You must leave here at once.

CARLOS

My fate is sealed.

LERMA

The Queen agrees— leave now! Do not postpone it
for a minute. The insurrection favors your
escape— that's why the Queen had stirred it up.
No one would dare to use force now against you.
A coach awaits you at the monastery,
and here are weapons— should you need them—
(He hands him two pistols)

[V-2]

CARLOS

Thank you, dear Count—

LERMA

Farewell, my Prince. Your trip be blessed and better times will come. But I— I won't be here. So, please accept my homage now.

(He kneels and kisses Carlos' hand.)

CARLOS (trying to lift him up)

No, my dear Lerma, no! You touch me deeply—

LERMA

King of my children! Yes, they'll be proud to die for you. I was denied that privilege. Return to Spain in peace and be a gentle king on Philip's throne. You've learned what suffering means. Remember it. May heaven guide you on your way.

(He gets up and rushes out.)

[Don Carlos]

SCENE THREE: *The Audience Chamber.*

It is late evening. All entrances are manned by guards. Several Grandees are waiting in the chamber, as the Dukes of Alba and Feria enter from opposite sides.

ALBA

The city's calm. How did you leave the King?

FERIA

In the most dreadful mood— locked in his room
and not permitting anyone to see him!
Posa's betrayal changed him so completely—
one can no longer recognize the King.

ALBA

Nevertheless, I have to see him. This time
I cannot spare him. A new discovery of
great importance—

FERIA

What now?

ALBA

It's been reported by my guards that a
Carthusian monk entered the Prince's rooms
without permission. He was arrested— and
when questioned under pain of death— he did
confess to carrying papers which the deceased
Posa had ordered him to take to Carlos
in the event he would not come to see him
before sunset.

FERIA

Well, what is in them?

ALBA

That at Cadiz a ship is lying ready
waiting to take him to Vlissingen and
that the Netherlands are waiting for
his coming to rise against the Spanish crown.

FERIA

Incredible!

ALBA

There is still more. Suleiman's ships, under
the pretext of alliance, reportedly
left Rhodes already to seek out and

[V-3]

to attack the Spanish fleet.

FERIA

We shall destroy them!

ALBA

These papers shed new light on Posa's recent travels throughout Europe. His plan was nothing less than to align all Northern powers in support of independence for the Netherlands.

FERIA

This is high treason!

ALBA

Plans for a war were outlined in detail—nothing was overlooked. But still more urgent—I have learned that Carlos is to meet the Queen tonight—and this is why I cannot lose another moment. Open the door and let me see the King.

FERIA

I have strict orders—no one is allowed to enter.

ALBA

I don't care. The Kingdom is in peril.

(To the guards) I'll take full responsibility—

(He is about to go in, as the King comes out of his study. Alba and Feria step back. The King's clothes are in disarray, and he slowly passes both like a sleepwalker, stopping at the other end of the chamber.)

KING

Return to me this man, my God! I must have him.

FERIA (softly to Alba)

Speak to him.

KING

He must think differently of me. I have to have him back.

ALBA

Sire!

KING

Who is speaking here? Have you forgotten

[Don Carlos]

I'm the King? Do you abstain from deference
because one man denied me his?

ALBA

No more of him, my liege. Another enemy,
more dangerous than he, is rising up
against the monarchy—

FERIA

Prince Carlos—

KING

He is a fool! But inexplicably,
he had a friend who gave his life for him.
I would have proudly called that man my son.
Yet he opposed me. The only independent
man in this whole Kingdom— and he betrayed me.
Europe may curse me, but not he— he owed me
gratitude. But now it is too late. The dead
don't rise. Yet am I to believe he died
for Carlos? Never! For a boy, a Posa
doesn't give his life. Nor could the modest
flame of friendship fill his heart. That beat for
all mankind. Could he forgive himself then
his betrayal? Could he abandon Philip
for the sake of Carlos? No, only the
old man for the young— his pupil. The father's
sun was setting, and he was waiting for
the sunrise of his friend. It is quite clear to
me: my death is anxiously awaited.

ALBA

These papers will confirm this very fact.

KING

Perhaps he had miscalculated. I am still
here, and in my veins I can still feel
the forceful pulse of nature. Who says I'm old?
I'll make a liar out of him! His vision
be no more than a daydreamer's fantasy,
his death that of a fool. His fall shall crush
his friend— yes, it shall crush this century!
The world's still mine, and I will use whatever
time I've left to make sure that for at least
ten generations no one shall plant again
that dreamer's seeds. He sacrificed me to
his idol, call it humanity or what
you will. But that humanity has to

[V-3]

atone for him! Let us begin now with
his puppet. *(To Alba)* What was it with the Prince?
Tell me again, what do your papers show?

ALBA

Precise instructions for the Prince how to
seize power and the throne, Your Majesty.
That is the legacy of Marquis Posa.

*(He hands the papers to the King who scans them. Then
he crosses the chamber silently.)*

KING

Call the Inquisitor Cardinal! Ask him
to give an hour of his time to me.

*(One of the Grandees goes out. The King looks at the
papers again, then hands them to Alba.)*

Tonight then is the night?

ALBA

At two o'clock, a coach will stop at the
Carthusian monastery. My informants
have reported that luggage has been
carried there, bearing the royal arms. And large amounts
of money are said to have been deposited
in the Queen's name for cash in Brussels.

KING

Where was the Prince last seen?

ALBA

With Posa's body.

KING

Is there still light in the Queen's chambers?

ALBA

All is quiet there. The Queen dismissed her
ladies earlier than usual. The Duchess
Arcos was the last to see her; she said
she left her sound asleep.

*(An Officer of the Guard enters and speaks briefly with Feria
who then turns to Alba and some of the other Grandees.)*

KING

Well, what goes on?

FERIA

Your Majesty, it seems incredible. Two guards
report that in the left wing of the palace,

[Don Carlos]

the Emperor's ghost was seen—

KING

My father's ghost? How did he appear?

FERIA

Dressed as a monk.

KING

A monk? How did the guards know that
he was the Emperor?

FERIA

He carried the imperial scepter in his hand.
It seems, he had been seen before in that attire.

KING

Did anyone address him?

FERIA

No one dared to. The guards prayed silently
and let him pass.

KING

And was this ghost seen entering the Queen's chambers?

FERIA

Yes, Sire.

KING

What's your opinion, Alba?

ALBA

I am not sure, Your Majesty.

KING (to the Officer of the Guard)

I want my guards to block all exits to
this wing. I am inclined to pay a visit
to this ghost.

(The Officer leaves. A Page enters and whispers to Alba.)

ALBA

Sire! The Inquisitor Cardinal.

KING

Leave us alone.

*(The Grand Inquisitor enters. He is an old man of ninety,
blind, and led by two Dominican monks. The Grandees bow
deeply as he passes them and kiss the seam of his robe,
while he raises his arms to bless them. Thereafter, all
Grandees leave the chamber; Alba motions the guards, and*

[V-3]

they, too, leave. As the Grand Inquisitor stands before the King, leaning on a staff, the two Dominican monks leave. There is a long silence.)

GRAND INQUISITOR

Do I stand before the King?

KING

Yes.

GRAND INQUISITOR

I had no longer expected it.

KING

I'm renewing an encounter of years gone by. Philip, the Prince, seeks counsel from his teacher.

GRAND INQUISITOR

My pupil Charles, your father, did not require counsel— ever.

KING

So much more fortunate was he. I have committed murder, Cardinal. My peace is gone—

GRAND INQUISITOR

Why have you murdered?

KING

A betrayal without parallel—

GRAND INQUISITOR

I am aware of it.

KING

What do you know? From whom? And for how long?

GRAND INQUISITOR

For years, what you have known since sundown.

KING

You've known about this man?

GRAND INQUISITOR

The record of his life was started— and concluded— in Santa Casa's holy register.

KING

He was permitted to walk free?

[Don Carlos]

GRAND INQUISITOR

The rope on which he pulled was long, but
nonetheless, it was unbreakable.

KING

He had already been outside the borders
of my realm.

GRAND INQUISITOR

No matter where he was, there I was, too.

KING (pacing back and forth)

If it was known then in whose hands I was,
why did one fail to warn me?

GRAND INQUISITOR

This question I return to you! Why did you
not ask before you threw yourself into
his arms? You knew him well enough to
recognize the heretic. What caused you
to deprive the Holy Office of this
victim? You've taken liberty with us.
And when the King stoops to conceal and seeks
agreement secretly with our foes, then
what is left for us? If you grant leniency
to one, how can we justify to
sacrifice a hundred thousand?

KING

He, too, was sacrificed.

GRAND INQUISITOR

No, it was murder— plain and sinful murder.
The blood that was to flow to our glory
was spilled infamously by an assassin's
hand. This man was ours! What empowered you
to touch the Order's sacred property?
His mission was to die through us. God gave
him to this era to demonstrate the
fallacy of vainglorious reason to
be destroyed in public. That was my plan.
But now the work of many years is wasted.
We have been robbed and all you've gained is
bloody hands.

KING

Reason was overwhelmed by feeling in this
case. You must forgive me.

[V-3]

GRAND INQUISITOR

Feeling? Is Crown Prince Philip answering me?
Have I alone grown old? Feeling! Why not
give freedom to all conscience in your realm
if you yourself are chained by feeling?

KING

I'm still a novice in these matters. Do
have patience.

GRAND INQUISITOR

No. I am not satisfied with you.
You've jeopardized your record as a king.
Where was the Philip whose unyielding soul,
fixed like the polar star in heaven, pivots
around itself eternally? Was the whole
past forsaken? And in that moment, when
you offered him your hand, was not the world
the same as always? And had the barrier
between good and evil, between truth and
falsehood suddenly collapsed? What is
resolve, what is man's constancy, and what
is faithfulness, if in one feeble
moment a rule of sixty years can melt
away just like a woman's whimsy?

KING

I've looked into his eyes. Leave me this one
relapse into mortality. To you
the world is missing one approach, as sight
has faded from your eyes.

GRAND INQUISITOR

What could this man have meant to you? What could
he show you for which you had not been prepared?
Are fantasies and dreams so new to you,
or was the boastful tongue of world reformers
so unaccustomed to your ear? If words
can shatter the foundation of your faith,
with what conviction have you signed the
death warrants for a hundred thousand who
ended at the stake for nothing worse?

KING

I had to have one human being. These
Albas— these Domingos—

GRAND INQUISITOR

Humans— what for? Men are for you but numbers,

[Don Carlos]

nothing more. Must I review the elements
of rulership with my green pupil? As
ruler of the earth forget to need those
things one could refuse to you. If you require
sympathy, then you equate yourself with
your own subjects. And in that case, what right
have you to govern?

KING

I am but human. What you are asking for,
God alone can do.

GRAND INQUISITOR

No, Sire. I am not easily deceived.
I see through you. You wanted to escape us.
The Order's heavy chains suppress you. You
wanted to be free— to be the only one. (*Brief pause.*)
We are avenged now. Be grateful to the Church
who is content to punish like a mother.
You were allowed to make your choice— blindly.
That was your chastisement. You've learned your lesson.
Now you come back to us. If I stood not
before you here, then, by the Living God,
you would have stood before me in the morning!

KING

Tone down your language, Priest! I will not be
addressed in such a manner.

GRAND INQUISITOR

I've given two kings to the Spanish throne,
and I have hoped to leave behind a firmly
founded house. I see my life's task is destroyed.
Philip himself ruins my edifice.
But Sire, for what purpose was I called?
What do you want of me? I am not willing
to repeat this visit.

KING

One final task— then you may go in peace.
The past is gone— Let there be harmony
between us. Are we reconciled?

GRAND INQUISITOR

Only if Philip will submit to us.

KING (after a brief pause)

My son is planning to rebel against me.

[V-3]

GRAND INQUISITOR

What will you do about it?

KING

All or nothing.

GRAND INQUISITOR

What do you mean by 'all?'

KING

I'll let him flee, if I can't let him die.

GRAND INQUISITOR

Well, Sire?

KING

Can you create for me a new religion
that will defend the murder of a son?

GRAND INQUISITOR

Atonement of eternal justice— that was
for what God's son died on the cross.

KING

Are you prepared to spread this point of view
throughout all Europe?

GRAND INQUISITOR

Anywhere the Cross is worshiped.

KING

I'm also sinning against nature. Can
you silence that voice as well?

GRAND INQUISITOR

Before the Faith, the voice of nature
has no standing.

KING

I'll place the task of judgment in your hands.
Can I withdraw completely?

GRAND INQUISITOR

Give him to me.

KING

He is my only son. What have I raised him for?

GRAND INQUISITOR

To return to dust rather than to freedom.

[Don Carlos]

KING

We are agreed. Now come with me.

GRAND INQUISITOR

Where to?

KING

You shall receive the victim from my hands.

(The King leads the Grand Inquisitor out.)

[V-4]

SCENE FOUR: *The Queen's Antechamber.*

It is dark. Carlos enters, dressed in a monk's habit, from which his sword is protruding; he removes a mask from his face. A door opens at the opposite side from which the Queen emerges, dressed in night clothes, carrying a candle.

QUEEN *(after a pause)*

So here we meet again?

CARLOS

Yes, here we meet again.

QUEEN *(struggling for her self-control)*

Do get up. We do not want to make each other sad, Carlos. For not with helpless tears can we pay tribute to your friend. With his life he bought yours. And shall that have been wasted for an empty fantasy? Carl, I myself have vouched for you. My pledge, I think, had made it easier for him to leave this world. You do not want to make a liar out of me!

CARLOS

I will erect a monument to him
no king has ever known. Over his ashes
a paradise shall blossom.

QUEEN

This is the way I want you! That was the meaning of his death. He chose me as executrix of his last will, and I shall hold you to the satisfaction of this promise. One other legacy he left to me. Into my hands— his Carlos he entrusted— *(fighting her emotion)* I will defy the world; no longer will I tremble before anyone. I will be bold— just like a friend. My heart shall speak. He called our love a virtue! I believe him—

CARLOS

Do not go on. I've dreamed a long, oppressive dream. I was in love. But now I am awake. The past is over. Here are your letters back. Destroy the ones I wrote. You need no longer fear my outbursts. A purging fire cleansed my love, and all my feelings live now in the grave.

[Don Carlos]

I have no more desires. (*After a brief pause, he takes her hand.*)
I came to say good-bye. I realize
there is a higher goal for me than to
possess you. One night, one mournful night, has
hurried on my manhood. His death has given me
my destiny—

QUEEN

Don't mind my tears, dear Carlos. I can't help it—
but, please believe me, I admire you—

CARLOS

You were to our pact the only confidante—
and in that role, you'll be the dearest person
on this earth. My friendship for you be as
great as was my love— till yesterday. And
if the will of providence should lead me
to the throne— the royal widow shall remain
inviolate.

*(Unnoticed by either of them, the King accompanied by
the Grand Inquisitor and his following of Grandees
appear in the background.)*

Now I must leave this land. I shall not see my
father in this life again. My sentiment
for him is dead. He's lost a son. So, be
his wife again— resume your duties as
the Queen. I must hurry— Madrid will see
me only as the King or not at all again.
And now farewell. (*He kisses her tenderly.*)

QUEEN

What have you made of me, Carlos? I dare
not dream what greatness you may reach, but I
can understand— I can look up to you.

CARLOS

Aren't I strong, Elizabeth? I hold you
in my arms without a tremor when only
yesterday, even the fear of death could
not have moved me from this spot. (*He releases her.*)
All that is past. I can face anything.
I held you in my arms and didn't tremble—
(A clock strikes once.)

Did you not hear something?

QUEEN

Only the cruel clock reminding us to part.

[V-4]

CARLOS

Good night, my Queen. From Ghent you will receive
my first dispatch. It will make clear our
relationship, and how it came about.
I go to challenge Philip in the open,
and from this moment on, there shall be no
more secrets. No longer need you shy the world.
This be my last deception.

*(As he is about to don his mask, the King stands
between them.)*

KING

It is your last!

(The Queen faints. Carlos rushes to her and holds her.)

CARLOS

Oh God in Heaven! Is she dead?

KING (icily to the Grand Inquisitor)

Cardinal, I've done my part. And now do yours.

(He goes away.)

FINAL CURTAIN.
